

French FM arrives today for talks on peace process

AMMAN (Petra) — French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine is due to arrive in Amman today on an official visit to the Kingdom, during which he is scheduled to be received by His Majesty King Hussein and HRH Crown Prince Hassan. He will also hold talks with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh. Discussions will cover the stalled Middle East peace process and Jordanian-French relations. Before leaving Amman Monday the French minister will address a press conference jointly with his Jordanian counterpart.

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Discussing draft '98 state budget

Deputies press Cabinet on soaring prices, unemployment and poverty

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Lower House deputies pressed the government of Abdul Salam Majali on soaring prices, escalating rates of unemployment and poverty during opening remarks at the House session Sunday which was devoted to discussing the draft 1998 state budget.

The budget amounts to JD1.95 billion, 5.7 per cent higher than last year's, with total expenditures estimated at JD1.87 billion and deficit at JD37 million.

The House, pressed for time, is expected to vote on the bill before the end of this month to enable the government to start disbursing this year's allocations.

The intensifying rates of poverty — estimated at about 30 per cent, along with unemployment that ranges from the official figure of 15

per cent to a figure of 27 per cent calculated by independent institutions — were the overriding concerns of the nine deputies who spoke during yesterday's session.

Deputy Abdul Hadi Majali, speaking on behalf of the 13-member Al Wifaq bloc, said that the country's economic aid package should not only be used to make up for the budget's deficit, but also to help eliminate poverty and unemployment.

"Our priorities in utilising economic aid should reflect on our challenges, and we believe that fighting poverty and unemployment are the biggest challenges," Mr. Majali said.

Soaring prices were also among the worries of most of the deputies who addressed the House yesterday.

Deputy Mahmoud Kharabsheh, referring to a three per cent price

increase envisioned in the budget draft, wondered about the measures that the government plans to take to deal with the problem and about the effects it has on the middle class.

"The steady increase in prices year after year is threatening the survival of the country's middle class, the main pillar of the society and a key instrument for its development, which has already begun shrinking," Mr. Kharabsheh said.

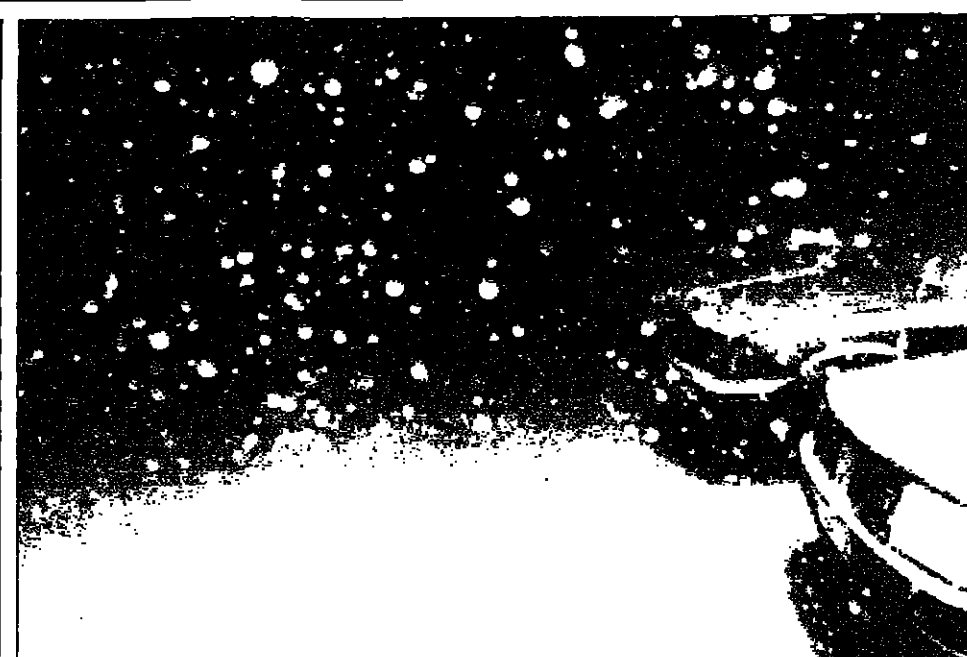
Deputies also addressed issues pertaining to their electoral districts, including problems that face those in the agricultural sector. The deputies also called on the government to encourage foreign investment in the country and to minimise the bureaucratic measures that discourage those who wish to invest.

The discussion follows a review of the budget by the House's finance and economic affairs com-

mittee, chaired by Ali Abul Ragheb.

Mr. Abul Ragheb has already submitted the committee's recommendations to the House, the Committee's recommendations cover issues like economic and social reforms, Jordan's debt, the balance of payment, the Kingdom's monetary policies, agriculture, water, energy, health, youth, civil defence, the private sector, the Aqaba Region, the Social Security Corporation, labour, and the function of the Ministry of Industry and Trade and Supply.

A total of 61 deputies are expected to address the issue in the coming days. Observers expect the budget to clear the House with almost the same number of deputies who granted their vote of confidence to Dr. Majali's government on Dec. 15, 51 out of 80 deputies.



Amman was covered in a white blanket of snow last night. The storms, expected to continue today according to the Meteorology Department, disrupted roads and air traffic at Queen Alia International Airport (photo by Youssef Allan)

Snow disrupts roads, air traffic; storm forecast to continue today

AMMAN (J.T.) — The snowstorms, rain and hail which swept Jordan Sunday are expected to persist Monday with temperatures dropping to zero at night and rising to a maximum of four degrees Celsius during the day.

A spokesperson for the Department of Meteorology (MET) said that the low depression centred over Syria and accompanied by a series of cold fronts will continue to affect the Kingdom and other parts of the eastern Mediterranean, Monday with more thunder showers and snow fall over areas rising 600 metres

above sea level. Air traffic at Queen Alia International Airport was disrupted last night while the airport authorities sought to clear snow from the runways, passengers said.

The MET spokesperson warned of fog and low clouds that make visibility poor especially in hilly regions with floods forming in valleys and low lying areas.

Snow blanketed western Amman Sunday and blocked roads making travel on them risky and dangerous, and prompting the Civil Defence Department (CDD) to issue a

warning to the public against making unnecessary trips.

The CDD announced that many roads, especially in the south and west, have become inaccessible due to snow and poor visibility. Traffic on Amman's main roads reached a standstill last night while snow blowers attempted to clear the major roads.

A CDD official said that citizens near low lying areas are being flooded with rain water and should move to safer ground. The CDD said in times of emergency its services can be reached on telephone 199.

Seven Palestinians injured in Hebron clashes Palestinians accuse U.S. of siding with Israel, warn of bringing region to 'brink of disaster'

RAMALLAH (AP) — Palestinians sharply criticised the Clinton administration in the wake of a visit by U.S. envoy Dennis Ross, saying Washington was siding too much with Israel at their expense.

Meanwhile, stone-throwing clashes broke out Saturday between Israeli troops and about 200 Palestinian protesters in the tense West Bank town of Hebron. Seven Palestinians were hurt by rubber coated bullets fired by the Israeli troops.

Mr. Ross' mission to the region ended Friday with Israel dismissing earlier pledges to Palestinians on West Bank troop withdrawals and announcing new settlement-building plans.

The Palestinian cabinet, meeting hours later, accused Israel of "pushing the already volatile situation of the region to the brink of disaster" by expanding Jewish settlements and refusing to

implement three promised troop redeployments.

After the Friday night meeting, Palestinian Higher Education Minister Hanan Ashrawi accused the Clinton administration of not doing enough to force Israel to honour prior agreements.

"It is clear that the U.S. administration did not act in the way that is needed to implement" earlier accords, she said.

She said Mr. Ross tried to "justify holding the peace process hostage to domestic concerns in Israel."

Mr. Netanyahu's government has been under heavy pressure from right-wingers in his coalition to not hand back more land to the Palestinians, and his dovish foreign minister, David Levy, departed after making clear his displeasure over the government's foot-dragging in moving ahead with the peace process.

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Israeli cabinet debates long list of demands to be presented to PNA

Combined agency dispatches

PRIME MINISTER Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet discussed Sunday a long list of demands to be presented to Palestinians as preconditions for any further troop pullbacks from occupied land, officials said.

The 10-12-page document was drawn up by Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh, who presented it as a list of unfulfilled Palestinian commitments under a January 1997 interim peace agreement.

"I prepared a document listing all the Palestinian (National) Authority's (PNA) commitments under the Hebron accord which have not been honoured," Mr. Naveh said on Israel Radio ahead of the meeting.

He said the document was to be approved by the ministers and then presented PNA President Yasser Arafat.

Mr. Netanyahu also intends to submit the list to U.S. President Bill Clinton when the two meet in Washington on Jan. 20, officials said. President Clinton is scheduled to meet with President Arafat two days later.

Mr. Netanyahu has vowed not to go ahead with a long-overdue troop withdrawal from the West Bank, also required under the Hebron accord, for a five-month "test period" during which the Palestinians must honour all their commitments.

According to Israel, these include extraditing Palestinian activists wanted by Israel for alleged involvement in anti-Israeli attacks, a demand President Arafat

is considered certain to reject.

Other demands, according to Israeli press reports, involve the specific cancellation of articles in the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) charter challenging Israel's right to exist, a reduction in the size of the Palestinian police and the dismantling of anti-Israeli groups.

The Palestinian National Council adopted a resolution in 1996 cancelling all articles of the charter deemed in contradiction with peace agreements with Israel. But the meeting did not specifically state which articles were being cancelled.

The Israeli document also insists that Palestinian officials and media halt all

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Sending Western troops to Algeria 'absurd' — Euro MP

BONN (AFP) — German Green Euro-MP Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who is preparing a trip to Algeria, has said it would be "absurd" to deploy Western troops to halt the atrocities there.

"The situation is not comparable to that in Bosnia," Mr. Cohn-Bendit told the German news magazine Focus, in an interview to appear on Monday.

"It would be absurd to send troops to Algeria... the situation is not comparable to that in Bosnia."

More than 600 people have died — mostly in massacres in remote villages — in the bloodiest Ramadan ever seen in Algeria since the start of an Islamist insurgency six years ago.

Mr. Cohn-Bendit, best known as a student leader during the May 1968 protest movement in France, is to lead a fact-finding mission by Euro-MPs to Algeria next month.

That effort is separate from a high-level mission that is to set off sometime

11 killed in attack southeast of Algiers

ALGIERS (AFP) — Eleven people were killed and one wounded in a "cowardly" attack overnight at Bordj-Khriss, 80 kilometres southeast of Algiers, security services said Sunday. The security services said they had started "intensive searches" of the area to find those responsible for this "ignoble act." Earlier Sunday an Algerian newspaper said a father and his son were killed by gunmen in the Saïda region of western Algeria. The man's wife and his daughter were kidnapped at the same time, according to the report in Le Soir d'Algerie which failed to specify when the incident took place.

This month to Algiers with delegates from Britain, Luxembourg and Austria — the present, past and future European Union chair nations.

Mr. Cohn-Bendit said it was crucial for the Euro-MPs to talk with all sides in Algeria.

"There is not just the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) at one end and the government at the other," he said. "There are also lay democratic forces. We hope that a round table will emerge, so as to put an end to the violence."

Mr. Cohn-Bendit did not rule out the possibility that such talks would be open to the shadowy GIA, the most notorious of several Islamist groups roaming Algeria.

But he added: "It would hardly participate. Who now knows what is behind the GIA?"

Evoking the role of President Liamine Zeroual's government, the Euro-MP said it was "possible and likely that the secret services are manipulating (Islamist) groups... but I doubt whether they are commanding them."

Iraq calls on oil firms to seal contracts

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq, poised to resume limited crude exports, on Sunday invited all foreign oil companies to seal contracts for the third term of the oil-for-food accord between Baghdad and the United Nations.

"Our call goes out to Arab and foreign companies, without exception, for them to present their offers," Commerce Minister Mohammad Mahdi Saleh told reporters.

An official of Iraq's state oil industry, meanwhile, told AFP that Baghdad has won U.N. approval of its pricing formula and stepped up contacts with foreign oil companies.

Under the oil-for-food accord, sanctions-hit Iraq is authorised to export \$2 billion worth of crude every six months to finance the purchase of humanitarian supplies.

Two-thirds of the revenue is earmarked for food and

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Iraq criticises composition of U.N. team

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq criticised the composition of a U.N. weapons inspection team that arrived in Baghdad on Sunday, pointing out that it was dominated by American and British members.

The team, headed by Scott Ritter, an American that Iraq has repeatedly accused of being an American spy, includes nine Americans, five Britons, a Russian and an Australian, the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) said.

The agency quoted an unnamed "official Iraqi source" as noting that Iraq has complained to the United Nations that the teams are "not balanced."

He added: "We have said that the Americans and the

(Continued on page 7)

Due to weather conditions, Arafat postpones visit until Tuesday

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has postponed from Sunday to Tuesday his planned visit to Amman due to stormy weather.

Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Omar Al Khatib said.

Sunday's visit had been arranged during a telephone conversation between Mr. Arafat and His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday.

Officials said the two leaders planned to discuss the troubled peace process and share an "iftar" meal breaking the fast during the Holy Month of Ramadan.

"The two leaders will discuss all problems facing the peace process and Israel's refusal to implement what has already been agreed upon with the Palestinians," Mr. Khatib told the Jordan Times.

King Hussein offered to send his personal helicopter to the West Bank town of Ramallah to bring Mr. Arafat over.

Mr. Arafat is also expected to brief King Hussein

and other senior officials on the outcome of last week's mission to the region by U.S. Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross. Mr. Khatib said.

The flurry of talks comes ahead of planned meetings in Washington between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Bill Clinton on Jan. 20 and between Mr. Clinton and Mr. Arafat on Jan. 22.

Many Arab officials believe the talks were the last chance to save the peace process, which has faltered since Mr. Netanyahu's hard-line coalition government took office in June 1996.

Mr. Ross left the region on Friday after four days of shuttling between President Arafat and Mr. Netanyahu failed to achieve any breakthrough in efforts to revive Israeli-Palestinian negotiations after a 10-month stalemate.

Mr. Arafat's cabinet warned in a statement issued after Mr. Ross' departure that the region was on the "verge of an

explosion" because of Israel's failure to carry out a promised troop withdrawal from many parts of the West Bank and its continued efforts to build more Jewish settlements in occupied territories.

A Jordanian official who requested anonymity said King Hussein was "extremely worried and concerned" over the lack of progress in the Israeli-Palestinian talks and by the apparent right-wing shift of Mr. Netanyahu's government following last week's resignation of moderate Foreign Minister David Levy.

He raised his fears during weekend talks in Amman with Israeli Knesset (parliament) Speaker Dan Tichon and Labour Party chief Ehud Barak. Both visits were described by Jordanian officials as "private" and in response to an invitation from King Hussein.

Jordan fears the resignation of Mr. Levy, which has

(Continued on page 7)

Police interrogate two in relation to attempt on Iraqi diplomat's life

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Police arrested two men in relation to the investigations into the attempt on the life of an Iraqi diplomat in Amman last week. Acting Minister of Interior Tawfiq Krishan said Sunday.

Mr. Krishan told the Jordan Times that the two are being interrogated to unveil circumstances that were behind the attack against Rahim Tahir, 45.

The Iraqi diplomat escaped unharmed when two assailants fired at his car while

he was driving in Um Uthaina on Jan. 3.

The minister declined to reveal the names or nationalities of the two men adding that all information will be announced as soon as the investigation is over.

Informed sources, who asked not to be identified, said the arrested two are Jordanians who were living in Baghdad. The sources did not elaborate.

The Arabic daily Al Arab Al Yawm reported on Sunday that one person suspected of involvement in the attack was arrested, while a second was

at large.

The daily, quoting security sources, said that the assailants used three rented cars.

Following the attack, Iraqi diplomats in Jordan accused Iraqi opposition and Israeli agents of carrying out the attack to "disturb the relationship between Baghdad and Amman."

The shooting followed the executions of four Jordanians in Iraq for smuggling car spare parts, which prompted the expulsion of seven Iraqi diplomats.

Israel to bar entry to Palestinian deadbeats

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel has decided to bar entry to the country to all Palestinians who owe large sums of money to the government or have court rulings against them over debts to Israeli businesses, officials said Sunday.

A justice ministry spokesman said a list of debtors was being compiled by the ministry and would be distributed to border police at crossing points from the West Bank and Gaza Strip into Israel.

The new regulations would apply to two categories of Palestinians.

One comprises individuals and businesses who have failed to pay money owed to the Israeli government such as parking tickets and other fines or value-added taxes.

The second category includes Palestinians who have had rulings issued against them by Israeli courts concerning unpaid debts to businesses and individuals, the spokesman said.

Palestinians appearing on the justice ministry list of deadbeats will have the right to appeal their cases, officials said.

According to Israeli press reports, debts by Palestinians to Israelis total millions of dollars.

Although the Oslo peace accords included agreements for mutual legal assistance in cases where Israelis and Palestinians failed to pay debts to the other party, no mechanism has been set up for such debt collection.

Israeli rabbis in secret talks to visit Jewish community in Iran

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli and Iranian religious leaders have held secret talks in a bid to arrange a visit by a delegation of Israeli rabbis to Jews living in Iran, a leading rabbi said Sunday.

Rabbi Menahem Fruman told the radio he had informed the Israeli government of his efforts but insisted that it was a non-official initiative.

"The Israeli government has been made aware of our initiative but it is a question of sending a delegation of spiritual leaders and not an official mission to Iran," he said.

Rabbi Fruman, an immigrant from Belgium, is considered somewhat of an eccentric. He lives in a West Bank settlement but is also a leading proponent of dialogue between Jewish and Muslim clerics and has held meetings with leaders of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas).

It appeared likely that his contacts with Iranian religious figures were arranged with the help of Hamas.

Last month the chief rabbi of Israel's Sephardic Jews of Middle Eastern or North African descent, Eliahu Bakshi-Doron, appealed for contacts between Israeli and Iranian religious leaders.

Rabbi Bakshi-Doron sent a message to the Iranian leadership via Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, who was in Tehran for a summit meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

Iranian clerics accepted the idea and suggested a meeting in a North African country.

Since the Islamist revolution in Iran in 1979, Tehran has refused to recognise Israel's right to exist.

There have been some hopes of an easing of the enmity since a relatively moderate cleric, Mohammad Khatami, was elected Iran's president last year.

President Khatami has made overtures to the West, and primarily the United States, but has remained scathing in his statements concerning Israel and the stalled peace process with the Arabs.



RAMADAN SHOPPING IN BAGHDAD: Iraqi women carry their goods as they shop at a Baghdad market Sunday. Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Saleh said Baghdad would resume oil exports within two days under the third phase of its oil-for-food deal with the United Nations. The sale of oil finances the purchase of food and medicine (Reuters photo)

DFLP reelects longtime leader

DAMASCUS (AFP) — The Damascus-based Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) re-elected its longtime leader, Nayef Hawatmeh, Sunday during a lengthy meeting here.

The meeting of the DFLP, which rejects the 1993 Oslo accords between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel, began Thursday and was held in the presence of 200 representatives from the Palestinian territories and diaspora.

The DFLP, one of the three main groups in the PLO, also elected a new nine-member political office.

They include Kais Abdul Karim, the group's official for the West Bank and Jerusalem; Saleh Zaid, DFLP representative for Gaza; Ali Fayssal, the DFLP official in Lebanon; Daud Talhami of Ramallah; and Tayssir Khaled of Nablus.

The group also elected a central committee of 60 members from Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and the diaspora.

The DFLP reiterated its "rejection" of the Oslo autonomy accords and called for "new negotiations" based on

U.N. resolutions calling for Israel to withdraw from occupied lands and on the principle of trading land for peace.

The group also stressed its support for the PLO, saying it is the "only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

The Marxist DFLP was founded in 1969 in a break with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, led by George Habash. Mr. Hawatmeh has headed the DFLP since 1969.

Egypt's top film-maker urges Annan to allow medicine flight to Iraq

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's top film-maker Youssef Shihane on Sunday urged U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan to authorise a direct flight from Cairo to Baghdad carrying medicine for humanitarian reasons.

Mr. Shihane specifically asked Mr. Annan, in a message obtained here by AFP, to allow the flight to take place on the first day of the Eid al-Fitr holiday which ends the fasting month of Ramadan (Jan. 29).

"We urge you to authorise an Egyptian plane carrying medicine to land in the Baghdad airport on the first day of the Eid al-Fitr holiday," Mr. Shihane said in the message.

"If that date is not convenient, we wish, should you agree in principle, to let us know what date would suit you, hoping it will be very soon," Mr. Shihane added.

Later last month Mr. Shihane accompanied a delegation of Egyptian artists, intellectuals and human rights activists to Baghdad with 2.5 tonnes of medicine.

Iran has been sharply critical of the Algerian government since the cancellation of the January 1992 legislative polls in Algeria, which the Islamist opposition was poised to win.

The decision sparked off a wave of anti-government violence led by the Islamists which has claimed an estimated 60,000 lives in six years.

Until 1992 the two countries had very close ties and Algeria represented Iran's interests in Washington after the U.S. cut relations with the Islamic Republic in the wake of the 1979 revolution.

But since 1992 polls relations have collapsed, with the Algerian authorities accusing Iran of seeking to destabilise it and Tehran refusing to recognise the legitimacy of the 1995 Algerian presidential elections.

Algeria had the lowest level of representation at the OIC summit here last

Iranian bid to end violence in Algeria hindered by mistrust

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's tentative diplomatic push to bring an end to the wave of massacres in Algeria has run into trouble as the deep-rooted feelings of mistrust between the two governments have spilled into the open.

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi contacted his counterparts in Italy and Greece by telephone last week to discuss the situation in the North African country after an alarming surge in the mass killings of civilians.

He also sent a message to United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan demanding action, and called on the Muslim World to end their "indifference."

The Iranian press has urged the government to seize the opportunity as president of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), which groups 55 Muslim nations, to take a lead role in ending the bloodshed.

But Iran's initiative has infuriated Algerians, who summoned the Iranian ambassador for a severe dressing down on Saturday.

And the row flared in public again on Sunday when Iran's powerful parliamentary speaker accused Algeria of direct involvement in the wave of massacres in the past two weeks.

"These crimes are the direct work of the military government which is massacring innocent Muslims in Algeria," charged Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, the leader of the country's conservatives.

"These massacres show that the Islamic movement is deeply-rooted and influential in Algeria, because the Algerian government is unable to suppress it," he added.

Algeria broke ties with the Islamic Republic in 1993 after accusing it of backing the Islamist rebels fighting to topple the government. Algiers regularly blames "terrorists," its term for Islamist

extremists, for the slaughter.

A new wave of killing erupted in Algeria at start of the fasting month of Ramadan at the end of December which has left more than 600 civilians dead, according to press reports.

The Algerian government has faced growing calls from the U.S. and the European Union to allow an international inquiry into the massacres, but has firmly rebuffed any such initiative as a violation of its sovereignty.

Iran's state radio warned Algerian President Liamine Zerroual on Sunday to heed international efforts to end the violence if it wanted to absolve itself of responsibility for the killings.

The new Iranian government of President Mohammad Khatami has tried to tone down Iran's firebrand international image, and in recent months it has edged towards a more balanced

stand on the Algerian conflict.

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Algeria had the lowest level of representation at the OIC summit here last

UAE mobilises to cleanup oil slick, avert environmental disaster

DUBAI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) launched a large-scale operation on Sunday to clean up an oil slick that has threatened its water desalination plants and raised fears of an environmental disaster.

The operation was launched four days after a barge coming from Iran sank off the northern emirate of Ajman and spilled nearly 4,000 tonnes (30,000 barrels) of fuel oil in the already polluted Gulf waters.

Experts said the accident was apparently caused because the barge was overloaded and not properly equipped for transporting oil. The barge sank Wednesday while docking eight kilometres off Ajman, according to Emirati maritime officials.

The delay in countering the slick due to lack of equipment resulted in substantial damage to ecological life in the nearby emirate of Umm Al Quwain, which has the world's second largest island colony of Socotra Cormorant birds after

Hawar, a disputed island between Bahrain and Qatar.

"If what we have seen and read about the spill is to be believed, then we have the makings of an environmental disaster on our hands," warned Colin Richardson, secretary of the Emirates Birds Records Committee.

"Reports... give little room for optimism that the oil pollution will be dealt with in time to save the fragile ecosystem of Umm Al Quwain's shallow lagoons," he wrote in Sunday's issue of the semi-official daily Emirates News.

"The mangroves, the marine life and the mudflats are no longer being threatened, they are actually being destroyed by thick fuel oil as you read this and there really is no time to spare."

The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), the UAE's best equipped body in combating oil accidents, said it had joined coast guards and other local and foreign teams in the cleanup operation that also included refloating the

barge.

"ADNOC also activated equipment supplied by the Petroleum Association of Japan," it said in a statement carried by the official news agency WAM.

The spill has stretched nearly 10 kilometres along the shorelines of the tiny emirates of Ajman and Umm Al Quwain, killed fish, blackened beaches and threatened their vital desalination plants.

Authorities said they had deployed booms around the plants, while the Ajman desalination facility was shut for two days to avert pollution.

Newspapers published pictures showing dead fish floating in the water while fishermen were told to stay out of affected areas.

Officials said the cleanup would take several days but they have yet to assess damage. Refloating of the 11,000-tonne barge also carries the risk of another spill as there are still large quantities of diesel in its tanks.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:00 Holy Koran
14:10 Hammerman
14:30 French Programmes
16:15 Prayers
16:30 Believe and Behave
17:00 Riding High
17:30 The Animal Show
18:00 Neighbours
18:30 News Headlines
18:35 Hope and Gloria
19:00 News in French
19:15 Ramadan Talks
19:35 The Health Show
20:01 Over a Cup of Tea
20:30 Country Music
21:10 Highlander
22:00 News in English
22:30 Emergency Room
23:15 Cosmos
23:59 Islam in a changing World

PRAYER TIMES

05:11 Fajr
06:32 Sunrise Doha
11:44 Dhuhur
14:32 Asr
16:55 Maghreb
18:17 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweithel, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.

632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terza Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 365897.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404.
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Cloudy and rainy weather conditions will prevail with snow falling over areas with an altitude over 900 metres above sea level.

Winds will be westerly active. In Aqaba, scattered showers are expected, winds southerly active and seas rough.
Min./Max. temp.
Amman Zero/04
Aqaba 09/16
Deserts 02/06
Jordan Valley 07/12

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 06, Aqaba 19 Humidity readings: Amman 95 per cent, Aqaba 45 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Khalil Abu Marjoub 779797
Dr. Fayed Al Dabbas 759155
Dr. Abdul Majid Al Sha'ir 791405
Dr. Adnan Zaghloul 898140
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778396
Al Aserna pharmacy 637055
Naioukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Mazen Abu Bakr 276852

Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Mazen Saffarini 985832
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Dept. 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 774111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co. 636581
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Luzmila 630195
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity 644281/6
Akileh Maternity 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 609833/23
Zarqa National Hospital 609905/60
Ibn Sina Hospital 609867/32
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 609909/90

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 602127/55/55
Greek Catholic Hospital 602127/55
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital 602127/100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 031514111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (52700).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15 Sunna (RJ)
08:25 Damascus (RJ)
08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
09:15 New Delhi (RJ)
09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
10:20 Cairo (RJ)
16:25 London (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:05 Kuwait (RJ)
18:35 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
19:00 Bangkok (RJ)
22:00 Vienna (RJ)
22:25 Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
23:15 Jakarta, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

Other Flights
04:15 London (BA)

09:15 Cairo (MS)
09:30 Al Arish (PF)
12:00 Khartoum (SD)
13:25 Bahrain (GF)
14:30 Doha (QR)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
16:00 Dubai (EK)
18:00 Istanbul (SD)
20:00 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:30 Athens (OA)
01:25 Amsterdam (KL)

Royal Wings (RW)
06:05 Tel Aviv (RW)
07:25 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
07:15 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
09:50 Aqaba (RW)
11:10 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
12:00 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
21:20 Aqaba (RW)
22:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20 Beirut (RJ)
10:10 Frankfurt, London (RJ)
11:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:05 Kuwait (RJ)
12:30 Cairo (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:40 Damascus (RJ)

Other Flights
06:00 Istanbul (TK)
08:25 London (BA)
10:30 Al Arish (PF)
10:30 Cairo (MS)
13:20 Istanbul (SD)
14:15 Bahrain (GF)
15:50 Doha (QR)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
17:00 Damascus, Dubai (EK)
19:00 Khartoum (SD)
21:20 Tel Aviv (LY)
23:53 Damascus, Paris (AF)
02:25 Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)
05:30 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
06:50 Tel Aviv (RW)
07:55 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
08:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
10:20 Aqaba (RW)
11:40 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
20:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50 Aqaba (RW)

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Princess Basma distributes school supplies to children

ZARQA (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma on Sunday visited the Palestinian refugee camp in Zarqa, where she distributed school bags, sportswear, and other school necessities to the children of needy families.

The visit was part of the ongoing Ramadan Charity Campaign, which was started at the beginning of the holy month by the Queen. Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) under the patronage of Princess Basma.

At the camp's youth club, the Princess, accompanied by the spe-

cial QAF charity committee, met with resident notables and committees in charge of improving the conditions of the camp.

In remarks at the meeting, the Princess urged the public to contribute generously to the charity campaign, which she said will benefit a large sector of Jordanian society in various regions.

Zarqa Governor Zeid Fayed expressed the governorate's deep appreciation of Princess Basma's efforts to help the needy.

A camp representative outlined the camp's activities and achievements,

noting that the committees are taking care of 120 orphaned children and providing them with cultural, social, and sports services.

The QAF committee Sunday had visited 250 homes and presented gifts and food, clothes, blankets, and heaters to their residents.

Taking part in the visits was Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi among other personalities.

The meeting with the Princess was attended by Ibrahim Tarshihi, head of the Department of Palestinian Affairs, and other officials.

New developments in Internet provider market spark 'price war'

By Ahmed Naser
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A price war has started between operative Internet service providers (ISPs) amidst an expected drop in the prices of international circuits and the advent of a new player into a crowded Web market for the Kingdom's approximately 7,000 private subscribers.

Global One, the largest ISP in Jordan with approximately 5,000 subscribers, and Index, which opened shop last summer, have started offering deals whereby new and old subscribers can get unlimited Web time as part of monthly subscriptions averaging JD50, as well as price drops on limited time deals. In comparison, Web surfers in the U.S. get unlimited Internet connection time for around \$20 per month (approximately JD4).

Sami Smeirat, Global's assistant sales and marketing manager, said the reasons behind the new price cuts were competition and a decrease in the number of subscribers.

Moreover, Mr. Smeirat said the new unlimited Web time deal would be profitable, considering that the majority of Global's subscribers would not "actually log on for 24 hours a day" due to current JTC rates on local phone calls.

Subscribers using four hours of Web time a day add around JD40 to their monthly phone bill in local calls, whereas users living outside the capital face higher expenses because they have to make national phone calls to Amman-based ISPs to get

Web time.

Noting that a greater majority of Global's customers do not own credit cards, Mr. Smeirat said "unlimited connection time deals also save customers the hassle of payments and assure them that they have Internet connection time whenever they feel like having it."

National Equipment and Technical Services (NETS) will follow suit within the next few days, according to Wisam Edghaim, NETS sales and marketing manager.

"I want to win all of Global One's customers, make them switch to NETS in any way possible...It's a price war," he said.

Originally only an on-line Bulletin Board Subscription (BBS), NETS started offering connection to cyberspace last summer and now has 1,500 Web subscribers, according to Mr. Edghaim.

FirstNet's general manager, Abdulmajed M. Elshawa, however, said the price cuts by Global and Index "had been conducted in a hurry and look like a gamble."

Nevertheless, he said he "believes that competition is healthy, as long as it is accompanied with good quality."

Asked by the Jordan Times whether FirstNet was considering a similar move, Mr. Elshawa said: "We will adjust our packages to give more value for the money...Our foremost priority is quality."

FirstNet, which began operations in October 1997 and played a key role in delivering Jordan's Nov. 4 election results hour-by-

hour, gave no definite timing for the availability of their new packages, stating only that they would be out "soon."

An industry source told the Jordan Times that the JTC has given verbal assurances that it will lower charges on international circuits to data communications providers. The JTC has a monopoly on international circuits and land lines that ends Jan. 1, 2003.

Web providers upgrade their connections with the JTC in increments based on speed. Each speed upgrade costs ISPs 20 per cent of the original charge.

In addition to the four operative ISPs, Jordan Internet Network (JOIN) will join the price war by the end of this month, said Tareq Abdul Lat, JOIN general manager, adding that he also expected the JTC to lower its prices.

Mr. Abdul Lat said JOIN did not feel threatened by the recent price cuts and introduction of unlimited connection time offers, adding that "price has become the decisive factor."

Notwithstanding, market observers agree that the coming period will define the major players in the market by seeing who survives the "price war."

Observers have estimated that Jordan has at least 80,000 users, since there are approximately 7,000 subscribers to private ISPs, in addition to 35,000 subscribers at the National Information Centre, which provides Internet access to government institutions and employees. A majority of Internet accounts are used by at least two different users.

Crown Prince urges colleges to maintain coordination in training mosque preachers

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has urged universities and specialised colleges to maintain coordination in training mosque preachers and to enhance dialogue for promoting their education.

Addressing a meeting of councils and committees of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs at the King Abdullah the Martyr Mosque, the Crown Prince stated that preachers and imams should present sermons tackling various topics in clear and pious terms so that all may understand.

Preachers and imams should be armed with knowledge of the various issues in educational, social, humanitarian, and security issues, he added.

Emphasising the importance of moderation and centrist attitudes, the Crown Prince said "it is this policy which reflects the true image of Arab and Islamic culture and one which is feared by our cultural adversary who tries to monopolise and secure influence in the world at the expense of Islam."

Prince Hassan called on the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to organise specialised workshops and present working papers designed to upgrade the efficiency of mosque preachers. He spoke on the need for coordination with Arab and Islamic universities in this matter so that every nation can have capable, well-educated preachers for the coming 21st century.

Referring to the question of zakat (alms for the poor), Prince Hassan underlined the need for applying the idea of zakat throughout the Kingdom, saying that this would be one step towards universalising an idea that displays true solidarity among Muslims.

He added that Jordan has been playing an effective role in clarifying the idea of pan-Islamic zakat and promoting the establishment of a special fund to help develop Muslim communities.

According to the Prince, the Islamic Nation's zakat fund could become a reality if the idea is applied first by a group of Islamic countries and then is gradually expanded.

He underlined the importance of the role of educational and cultural centres, which he said can operate during summer vacation to impart knowledge to students from the 56 nations of the Organisation of Islamic Conference.

Referring to the waqf lands (endowment estates), the Prince called for coordination with the government to develop them in the coming years.

Following the address, which was attended by Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'ed Ben



Zeid and HRH Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad. His Majesty King Hussein's cultural secretary, the committee members held a dialogue on several topics concerning the work of preacher and imams.

Before addressing the meeting, Prince Hassan opened a book exhibition organised by 17 Jordanian institutions. The exhibition will last until Jan. 27.

Japan provides support to educational projects in Karak

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government of Japan has granted a total of \$62,527 to support the educational sector in Karak, including Karak Qasaba Educational Directorate and the Latin Primary School, according to a Japanese embassy press release Sunday.

Takayuki Kimura, Japanese ambassador to Jordan, and Abdul Rahman Ma'aytah, director of Karak Qasaba Educational Directorate, signed an agreement for the first project, worth \$48,474, at the embassy of Japan on Sunday. Under this agreement, the Japanese embassy will

provide 525 stoves for 89 schools in the area to ensure favourable learning conditions for students in winter, the statement read.

Mr. Kimura also signed a \$14,053 grant agreement with Father Khalil Jaar, principal of the Latin Primary School in Karak, one of the oldest in the Kingdom, to help finance the renovation of school facilities to meet the latest standards set by the Ministry of Education. The grant will finance the purchase of desks and chairs and other school furniture to improve learning conditions for students, the statement said.

These grant are the fourth and the fifth in a series under the Japanese Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects (GAGP) in the Japanese fiscal year 1997. Previous grants included a \$90,600 grant to Al Farouq Society for Orphan's Care in Irbid, a \$49,256 grant to Jordan's Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature to help finance a conservation project for the rare Nubian ibex, and an \$11,341 grant to the Sweileh branch of the Circassian Charity Association to help finance the purchase of sewing machines and other needlework equipment, according to the announcement.

Through this schemes, Japan has donated \$2,384,941 since 1993 to non-governmental organisations and local communities in Jordan in addition to the general assistance to the government of Jordan. Of this, a total of \$509,768 of GAGP grants has been used in the educational sector, mainly providing stoves to public schools in Salt, improving the facilities of school libraries in Karak, constructing a children's library in Mafrqa, and providing a Braille printer for a school for the blind. These projects have helped provide

students with better learning conditions and have made their school life easier, the statement said.

In remarks following the signing ceremony, Mr. Kimura said: "Japan believes in the vital importance of education with its own experience in the process of development. The embassy of Japan will continue to extend support to projects aimed at human development and improving primary education, and we hope that this type of assistance will help improve the standard of education in Jordan."

German standards institute director visits

AMMAN (J.T.) — The director of the German Institute for Standardisation (DIN) and the director general of the Jordan Institution for Standards and Metrology (JISM) recently met to discuss issues of common interest to DIN and JISM in standardisation, certification, and related activities, according to a JISM press release.

Helmut Reihlen, DIN director general, toured the institute and met with the heads of various departments, the standards project team leader, and other experts. Dr. Reihlen gave a lecture on the role of DIN and the significance of standards for the economic development of Germany and Europe, including the removal of technical barriers to trade, the statement continued.

JISM and DIN intend to sign an "agreement on cooperation in the fields of standardisation and certification" in due course in order to promote the development of scientific, technical, and economic relations between Jordan and Germany, the announcement read.

The DIN was founded in 1917 and Dr. Reihlen has been the DIN director since 1972. DIN is working to initiate European and international standards and many German standards have become international standards and are applied worldwide, the statement said.

Coalition of tourist bus companies draws criticism from tour operators

By Ahmad Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A coalition of three Jordanian tourist bus companies has come under fire from local tour operators who say the new monopoly and price rises has dealt the fragile tourism industry a heavy blow.

Jordan Express Tourist Transport (JETT), Petra Tourist Transport Company, and Jordan Investment and Tourism Transport Company (Alpha) formed a JD11 million coalition in September to cut losses caused by a drop in the number of tourists visiting Jordan.

The flood of tourists that flocked to Jordan after the 1994 peace treaty with Israel has declined dramatically since Israel's hard-line Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took office 19 months ago, stalling prospects of Middle East peace.

The coalition, with 270 buses, is the sole operator of tourist buses in Jordan.

Its decision to increase prices by 30 per cent has caused an outcry among tour operators, because many were unable to increase prices of packages already sold to foreigners.

On average, transport accounts for 25 per cent of the price of any tour package. "We understand their financial problems, but monopolising the business is not the solution," said Firas Hafez, general manager of Pan-Arabian, a leading tour operator.

"Killing the spirit of competition and forcing travel agents and tour operators to accept unfair price increases is unacceptable," he told the Jordan Times.

operational, financial and depreciation costs at JD1.27 million.

Many tour operators say they are no longer able to benefit from the previous competition between the three companies, which helped them lure price-conscious tourists travelling on tight budgets.

Others say they find it difficult to commit themselves to fixed packages in a highly-competitive regional tourism market if transport fares keep changing under the new price monopoly.

Many, who made profits from commissions given to them in return for using the services of the three bus firms, also say they cannot further reduce the overall price of packages.

The Jordan Society of Tourist and Travel Agents is pressing the government to dissolve the coalition on grounds that it forms a monopoly. They are seeking guarantees that bus fares remain unchanged until the end of this year.

Many believe that the three companies pooled resources to circumvent efforts to ban monopolies, included in a draft law that Parliament is expected to debate later this year as part of efforts to liberalise the economy.

"They saw the danger coming from the crushing price competition and realised that no new companies would enter the market, so they joined efforts to consolidate their positions," said a transport expert.

But JETT General Manager Adnan Mufit rejected this criticism and defended the coalition's move.

Mr. Mufit, who has been JETT's top man for years, said the coalition's bus rental prices were cheaper than rates already set by the Ministry of Tourism.

"For example, the official rate for a 50-seat bus travelling 200 kilometres a day was set at \$253, but we are charging \$230," he said.

He denied the coalition formed a monopoly.

"What happened was a unification of reservation and price to achieve a fair division of work for each company," according to Mr. Mufit.

"At one stage, speculation became crazy...companies were offering rates at 50 per cent below cost so the only solution was to unify charges and reservations."

Despite the move, the coalition is still incurring losses because of a drop in tourist arrivals this year that has kept a large number of their buses idle.

Mr. Mufit also rejected claims by travel agents that

they were not given enough time to study the new price increases and compare them with rates quoted in neighbouring countries.

Many tour operators want the government to ease the rules regulating the creation of tourist transport companies, which currently include owning at least 50 modern buses and having a JD10 million capital.

Some say they would like to operate buses similar to their counterparts in other countries.

A sharp increase in the arrival of tourists to Jordan after 1994 strained the capacity of JETT, then the country's sole operator of specially-equipped and modern buses.

The government allowed Alpha and Petra to enter the market to provide similar services, thus breaking JETT's decades-old monopoly.

A total 1.13 million tourists visited Jordan in 1996, spending JD527 million.

WHAT'S GOING ON

SLIDE LECTURE

* "Analysis of the Features of Umayyad Buildings in Jordan" (in Arabic) by Dr. Mohammad Hataleh of Yarmouk University at the Friends of Archaeology Centre at 7:30 p.m. (Tel. 696682).

CONCERT

* Musical performance by Al Hannounah Musical Band at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m. (until Jan. 13).

FILM

* French film "Mon Oncle" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh at 8:30 p.m.

SECOND PLASTIC ART WEEK

* Abstract (plastic) art by several artists at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Jan. 17.

* Slide lecture on the experience of the late Jordanian artist Tawfiq Al Sayid by Mohammad Abu Zariq.

* Film on the life of Spanish artist Salvador Dali at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:00 p.m.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iftar banquet postponed

AMMAN (Petra) — Due to adverse weather conditions, the Royal Court on Sunday announced the postponement of an iftar banquet that was scheduled to be hosted Monday by His Majesty King Hussein for dignitaries from Amman and Balqa.

Ministry announces Tawjihi deadline for independent students

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Education's examination department announced Sunday that students studying on their own and wishing to sit for the General Secondary Certificate Examination (Tawjihi) next summer should submit applications by Jan. 15, 1997. The announcement said such students should send their applications to the directors of educational departments in their respective regions by the given deadline. Otherwise the application will not be accepted.

National Aid Fund releases 1997 figures

AMMAN (Petra) — In a statement released Sunday, the National Aid Fund (NAF) said it spent JD17

million in 1997 to support registered needy families. The statement noted that JD13,692,898 were given as recurrent financial aid and JD208,475 financed vocational training courses for heads of poor families to enable them to embark on a trade. The statement added that during the month of Ramadan, the NAF is conducting a special programme offering a financial bonus to the needy.

Masri meets with president of Canadian university

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Education and Higher Education Muntaser Masri on Sunday conferred with the president of Concordia University in Canada. Discussion covered aspects of educational cooperation and research programmes. The minister briefed the guest on the standard and nature of the Kingdom's educational programmes, enrolment of students in universities, and academic as well as vocational training courses offered by these universities. Discussion also covered prospects of cooperation between the Canadian university and the Kingdom's higher institutes of education.

Thousands left homeless, injured after earthquake in China

ZHANGBEI COUNTY, China (AFP) — Tens of thousands faced freezing temperatures and the threat of severe aftershocks Sunday as the Chinese army mounted a massive relief operation following an earthquake here which killed 47 and injured more than 11,000.

Even as truckloads of troops arrived in the area carrying warm clothing, food, water and medical supplies, the number of injured soared to 11,439, some 1,252 of them in serious condition, reports said.

More than 44,000 people were left homeless in Zhangbei, Shangyi and Wanquan counties in Saturday's quake and now face temperatures which plummeted to minus 20 degrees Celsius overnight, according to state media.

Over 100 aftershocks have already been felt following the quake which measured 6.2 on the Richter scale, with experts warning that another aftershock of around 5.0 — capable of causing considerable damage — was likely.

The region has also suffered enormous economic

damage estimated at about 2.39 billion yuan (\$288 million), Xinhua news agency said.

The quake occurred in a sparsely-populated hilly region in the northeastern province of Hebei near the Great Wall, about 220 kilometres northwest of the capital.

Many residents have been ordered not to sleep inside their houses, despite the driving cold, because of the possibility of aftershocks. Most of the village houses in the area are hand-built from mud and stone, and are easily damaged.

Some 13,606 houses were destroyed in the province and another 26,000 were severely damaged and deemed too dangerous to reenter.

So far, 2.14 million yuan worth of goods have been delivered to the region, including some 1,200 tents, 21,000 cotton overcoats and quilts, and 15 tonnes of food and medicine, Xinhua reported.

Army vehicles were seen pouring into Zhangbei county, the worst-hit region, Xinhua reported that about 1,500 troops have arrived in the area already.

Villagers in Xisungou village, about 10 kilometres south of the county seat of Zhangbei, said the quake was the biggest they had felt since a 1976 earthquake, which claimed at least 242,000 lives in Tangshan county outside of Beijing.

"There was a rumbling noise, and everything hanging on the walls fell off," said a farmer named Wang, who lives in Xisungou.

"A lot of yellow dust came up from the earth. I ran outside. The village cadres told us to sleep outside, even though it was very cold, because it was too dangerous to sleep inside the house."

Although his house was damaged, but not destroyed, Mr. Wang was distraught, saying he did not have enough money to repair the large crack which split through his walls during the quake.

He said the people in the village had stayed awake all night, walking back and forth to keep warm.

On Sunday, trucks were collecting private donations of blankets from citizens in Zhangbei county, for the homeless in the worst-hit areas.

Chinese media reported makeshift tents had been erected to house people.

Local hospitals and the People's Liberation Army have sent 12 medical teams to Zhangbei and Shangyi, to help the wounded, it said.

People were seen searching for leftover rice from collapsed houses to boil for food overnight, newspapers reported. Police had set up roadblocks around Zhangbei county Sunday and were barring journalists from entering the site as army trucks entered the checkpoints with relief workers and aid.

The tremor was lightly felt in the capital.

Government seismologists from neighbouring Shanxi province, Inner Mongolia, and other parts of Hebei province have been sent to monitor the situation for aftershocks, the People's Daily said.

Pakistan late Saturday said it would send relief aid, Xinhua said, adding that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had sent a message of sympathy. Hong Kong has also said it may proffer aid to the stricken area.



A woman, surrounded by salvaged possessions from her destroyed home, stands near the entrance to a haystack that was the only safe shelter for villagers from Nanfengbei after an earthquake destroyed more than half of the buildings in the village in Hebei province in China's north (Reuters photo)

State of emergency declared in flood-hit Australian state

BRISBANE, Australia (AFP) — Up to 20 people were reported missing and hundreds of homes flooded Sunday after torrential rain devastated a city in Australia's Queensland state, prompting the government to declare a state of emergency.

More than 55 centimetres of rain fell in 24 hours in the worst-hit area of Townsville in north-eastern Australia with another 10 centimetres forecast overnight. The rain that fell in one day is equivalent to half of the city's average annual rainfall.

"It's a major disaster. People are missing and there's considerable damage," said Queensland Premier Rob Borbidge, adding that damage ran into millions of dollars.

State Emergency Services executive director Daryl Powell told reporters at least three people were confirmed missing, "but we have reports that there may be many more." Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio said as many as 20 were unaccounted for.

One of those missing was a man in a wheelchair believed washed out of his car and down a stormwater drain. Another man miraculously survived unscathed after being swept six kilometres through a stormwater drain.

"Townsville is in an absolute mess," Mr. Powell said.

The flooding caused landslides and rockfalls and cut road and rail links.

It was the highest recorded downpour in the city's history and represented half its normal annual rainfall.

More than 20,000 people were without electricity while other services, including water and telecommunications, had also been affected. On nearby Magnetic Island, an entire wing of an international resort was damaged by a landslide and evacuated. People in low lying areas around the city were airlifted to safety by helicopter.

A state of disaster declaration automatically triggers state or joint state-federal emergency relief funding.

Acting Prime Minister Tim Fischer, standing in for a holidaying John Howard, said the government had activated the armed forces to assist.

The flood situation was likely to be exacerbated later Sunday when a massive tide of nearly four metres was expected, weather bureau forecaster Gaving Holcombe said.

"The effect of the tide will be to stop floodwaters running off into the sea, as well as causing extensive salination of freshwater areas," he said.

He said the tropical low generating the rain, the remnants of former tropical cyclone Sid, was now stationary to the north-west of Townsville. It was expected to dump another 100 millimetres of rain on the area later Sunday.

The effects of the low were being felt the length of the Queensland coast. Many beaches on the Sunshine and Gold coasts remained closed for a second day because of mountainous, churning surf cresting at up to 2.5 metres.

Meanwhile, in Victoria state a search resumed Sunday for two teenage sisters swept away by huge surf Friday. The girls' two young cousins, aged four and seven, died.

Pope appeals to African leaders to end violence on continent

VATICAN CITY (AFP) — Pope John Paul II Saturday appealed to African political leaders to put an end to the rule of violence on the continent.

The Pope's New Year's address to the Vatican diplomatic corps constituted an overview of world "trouble spots," including Algeria, central African nations, and countries in Asia and in the Middle East. Algeria he described as "a nation held to hostage by inhuman violence which cannot be justified by any political cause or still less any religious motive."

He called for "good will, in Algeria and elsewhere, to unite in order to allow those who believe in dialogue and fraternity to be heard."

Referring to Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Congo, the Pontiff spoke out against the "armed conflict, the displacement of persons, the tragedy of refugees, deficient health conditions, defective administration of justice," caused by strife in these four Central African nations.

"Today, in the greatest silence, intimidation and killing still continue," he stated.

Addressing the political leaders of these nations, he went on to warn that "Africa will never experience peace or development" if violence is accepted as a norm in attaining power, if corruption and the arms trade continue, if ethnicity dictates all other concerns and if democracy is pushed aside.

In a speech characterised by its notes of caution, the Pope urged Africans to resist reliance on outside assistance in all spheres and to foster solidarity among the continent's nations.

"They should all assist one another in the analysis and evaluation of political options," he said, adding that "the countries of the continent should favour peace-making and reconciliation, if necessary through peace forces composed of African soldiers."

This, he declared, would bring Africa credibility on a global level, and "international help would doubtless become more intensive."

N. Ireland talks set to resume, Blair hopeful for breakthrough

MADRID (AFP) — The interior minister of Spain's troubled Basque country said in an interview Sunday that the region will look after its own security in the wake of ETA-attributed violence.

Interior Minister Juan Maria Azkara told the daily El Pais: "I would never agree to the central government interfering in our security."

He added that suggestions for the national police or the army to be deployed in the Basque country following the killing Friday of a conservative politician would be "a political mistake."

"It would amount to holding Basques responsible for the bloodshed and I am not willing to accept that," he said.

The region has seen nearly three decades of violence between authorities and ETA separatists fighting for an independent Basque homeland.

Mr. Azkara's published comments came two days after the car bomb killing of local councillor Jose Ignacio Iruretagoyena — the third such attack on a politician from Spain's ruling Popular Party in the last seven months.

They also coincided with reports from police in the northern Basque town of Bilbao of five fire-bomb attacks in the region.

In one of the attacks, 30 youths wearing balaclavas threw Molotov cocktails on to a patrolling police car in the town of Guernica. The two officers abandoned their car and escaped, one of them with burns to his hand and leg.

The police blamed the attack on ETA sympathisers. Hours earlier in the nearby town of Andoain, a car belonging to a local councillor with the Basque Nationalist Party was doused in fuel and set alight. Two nearby vehicles were also damaged by the flames.

The police also said three separate attacks had taken place against bank teller windows, one in Guernica, one in San Sebastian and one in Pasajes de San Pedro. In the latter two cases, automatic cash machines were destroyed.

Zambian president warns neighbours not to interfere over Kaunda detention

LUSAKA, Zambia (AP) — President Frederick Chiluba warned his country's neighbours not to interfere after former President Kenneth Kaunda was formally charged with plotting a coup.

The charges were brought Saturday under international pressure to either charge or release Mr. Kaunda, 73, who was arrested Christmas day.

Mr. Kaunda was transferred from jail to house arrest Dec. 31 after protests from South Africa's President Nelson Mandela, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and Tanzanian leader Julius Nyerere.

"Although Zambia is keen to promote friendly relations with neighbouring countries, interference in its internal affairs will not be tolerated," Mr. Chiluba told members of his ruling Movement for Multi-Party Democracy at Saturday's launch of a party fund raising drive here.

Mr. Kaunda's Lusaka home has been sealed off with barricades by paramilitary police, his phone has been cut off and he has been banned from political activities and contacts with the media.

Further hearings are due Monday in Lusaka's High Court on Mr. Kaunda's plea for a habeas corpus writ that

would order his release.

The charges against Mr. Kaunda are that he and fellow opposition leaders Dean Mung'omba, detained in October, and Roger Chongwe, now in self-imposed exile in Australia, sponsored the failed coup on Oct. 28.

Soldiers planned to rule for three months, then hand power to a civilian coalition headed by the three, the documents allege.

Mr. Chiluba ousted Mr. Kaunda in the nation's first multi-party elections in 1991. Mr. Kaunda led Zambia to independence from Britain and ruled virtually unchallenged for 27 years.

Ousted for insanity, Bucaram to run again for Ecuador's presidency

PANAMA CITY (AFP) — Exiled former Ecuadorian President Abdala Bucaram, ousted from office last year for insanity, was chosen here to run for upcoming presidential elections by members of his political party.

Some 120 members of Bucaram's Populist Roldosista Party (PRE) held a convention at a hotel here Saturday to choose the former president as their candidate for the May elections.

In February 1997 Ecuador's parliament replaced Mr. Bucaram with Fabian Alarcon after declaring the former mentally unfit to hold office. Mr. Bucaram, elected in August 1996, fled to Panama.

He was sentenced in absentia earlier this week by

Ecuador's Supreme Court to two years in jail for slandering an ex-deputy and a former presidential candidate.

Mr. Bucaram insists he is innocent, and that the accusations are politically motivated.

However the former president, who enjoys his nickname of "El Loco" (the madman), also faces 56 other legal charges, including illicit enrichment and abuse of power.

Now that Mr. Bucaram has been sentenced to prison, under Ecuador's new constitution he is forbidden from holding public office.

Mr. Bucaram still considers himself the legitimate president, insisting that he was ousted by a coup last year.

"If Bucaram is crazy and has no popular support, as my adversaries claim," Mr. Bucaram said earlier in the week, "then they have nothing to fear."

Supreme Court President Hector Romero said Mr. Bucaram broke the law when he charged former legislator Alexandra Vela and former presidential candidate Jaime Nebot with corruption.

Mr. Bucaram had accused Mr. Vela of stealing classified documents concerning a 1981 plane crash that killed then-Ecuadorian President Jaime Roldos.

Mr. Bucaram said Nebot stole \$5 million from a highway construction project in the Pacific port of Guayaquil while he was governor there.

Indians get together, just for a laugh

BOMBAY (AFP) — More than 7,000 Indian met in Bombay Sunday — just for a laugh.

Members of more than a hundred "laughter clubs" from across the country marked World Laughter Day with a 15-minute guffaw at the centre of the capital of the western state of Maharashtra.

The session was followed up by "singing and having fun", organiser Madan Kataria said.

Dr. Kataria, a doctor and the editor of a health magazine, became interested in the therapeutic properties of laughter two years ago and invited four sceptical friends to test out the idea in a local

park.

"We began by standing in a circle and inviting one of us to tell a joke. This went on well for 15 days, but after that the stock of clean jokes ran out."

"Finally we decided to ban jokes and said we would laugh without them. The best way is to look at each other's faces and laugh."

There are 47 laughter clubs in Bombay and 107 in India.

Dr. Kataria adds: "Laughter opens you up, makes you socialise, reduces depression and stress levels, makes your ego work positively for you and relaxes you."

"Laughter exercises your throat, stomach, face,

diaphragm, stabilises your blood pressure and also strengthens your immune system."

He says most sessions are held early in the morning, run by an anchor person, and involve breathing exercises.

Dr. Kataria lists several kinds of laughter. "There is the big or hearty laughter, the silent laughter with the mouth wide open, the humming laughter with lips closed, the medium laughter or dancing laughter or 'cocktail' laughter."

Dr. Kataria adds: "Our commitment is to laugh and not to fall sick. Life is too short, let us laugh, forgive and forget, live and let live."



Police drag a youth from a demonstration of left-wing groups in honour of murdered Socialist leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, in Berlin. Police arrested several people after stones were thrown from inside a group of several hundred demonstrators, some of whom were masked (Reuters photo)

Rajiv Gandhi's widow denies PM ambitions, launches polls campaign

SRIPERUMBUDUR, India (AFP) — The widow of former Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi denied here Sunday she held prime ministerial ambitions as she launched her debut election campaign at the site of her husband's 1991 assassination.

Sonia Gandhi, surrounded by hundreds of armed police and security commandos, told around 20,000 supporters she did not want to become prime minister.

The Italian-born 51-year-old said, however, that she had been persuaded to campaign on behalf of her husband's once-dominant Congress party because of the threat of India fragmenting along religious lines.

"I am here not to seek political office or position but to share my concern over the country's future," she said.

"We do not want our society to be broken into fragments. A vote for Congress is a vote for Rajiv's vision of India."

Though she preferred to remain a private person following the killing of Rajiv Gandhi by a suicide bomber in 1991, "the time has come when I feel compelled to step forward and put aside my personal inclination."

General elections are due to be held between Feb. 16 and March 7 after the collapse of a minority coalition in November.

The Congress is hoping to exploit the Gandhi name and return to power after being voted out of office in 1996.

Most analysts, however, are forecasting a hung parliament, with the Hindu nationalists consolidating their position as India's largest party.

Sonia Gandhi began her visit by retracing her husband's final steps and lay-

ing jasmine flowers before his memorial, a glass pavilion containing a picture of him and an oil lamp.

She made her speech from a nearby platform inside a schoolground after the area had been cordoned off and combed by army explosives experts.

Wearing an orange and green sari and speaking in English, she told an enthusiastic, banner-waving audience: "Today I stand, surrounded by security, at a place where he stood, facing his assassins valiantly, alone and unprotected."

"Millions and millions of our countrymen looked at him as a great leader. We saw him as a man of courage and a leader of compassion and wisdom. He will always be remembered as a true and noble son of India."

"I grieve for him. Today, the India of his dreams is being increasingly threatened."

The Congress has lost support steadily since the 1980s after ruling India for around four decades under the Nehru-Gandhi family. It is projecting Sonia Gandhi as its figurehead, with its real leaders being left off campaign posters.

In a clear reference to the Hindu nationalists, whom the Congress accuse of sectarianism, she attacked those "whose only interest is to grab power at any cost ... in the name of religion, caste and region."

"The Congress is the only party truly representing all the people across the country."

Accompanied by her daughter Priyanka, she added in a 15-minute speech — peppered with a few Tamil phrases which raised huge applause and chants of "Long live Sonia Gandhi" — that she was "conscious of the shortcomings" of the Congress.



Sonia Gandhi waves in front of a poster of her husband the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at a mammoth crowd at Sriperumbudur (Reuters photo)

But she said she believed that "under the right leadership it can give India what it needs — a stable government."

Refuting Hindu nationalist jibes that she was a foreigner, the widow, who married in 1968 and became an Indian citizen in 1986, added: "I became a part of India 30 years ago when I entered Indira Gandhi's home as the wife of her elder son."

"My commitment to our people and the country is unwavering and absolute." She also made the Indian traditional greeting of

"namaste", with palms joined, to the crowd several times.

Congress officials later claimed 100,000 people had attended the rally. Police put the figure at 20,000.

Rajiv Gandhi's assassination by suspected Sri Lankan Tamil separatists indirectly triggered the current elections.

Congress toppled the previous minority coalition after it refused to expel a member party accused of having links with the separatists blamed for the murder.

24 Shiite Muslims slaughtered

LAHORE, Pakistan (AP) — Shiite Muslim worshippers were kneeling in prayer before the white marble grave of their leader Sunday when two gunmen burst into the graveyard and opened fire.

People scrambled for cover. Small children hid themselves behind the graves. Some covered themselves in the colorful chadars or shrouds that are traditionally draped over graves. People screamed and people who survived said they heard others begging the gunmen to stop.

"But they just kept firing. We ran, but there was nowhere to go," said Mohammed Raza, who was wounded in the bloody slaughter at the Momin Para graveyard for Shiite Muslims.

When the shooting ended dozens of dead and wounded lay on the ground.

An infant and an old woman were among the victims.

"They didn't stop firing. I don't know how long it lasted, but it seemed for a very long time. When they were finished

they got on their motorcycle and drove out," Mr. Raza said.

The prayer leader, Allama Akbar Abbas Najvi, was about to distribute copies of the Muslim holy book, the Koran, but first he issued a warning: "We must be very cautious. We are not safe here in Pakistan."

"He said 'we're not safe' and it was then that the gunmen came in and started shooting," Mr. Raza recalled. The worshippers had gathered to pay tribute to Shiite leader and teacher, Mohammed Hussein Rizwan, who had died two years earlier.

Worshippers who had survived the carnage hurried out of the graveyard stopping cars, motorised rickshaws and motorcycles pleading with them to help.

They grabbed the wounded and rushed them to the nearest hospital where an appeal went out for blood. Ten of the wounded were small children, between 5 and 10 years old.

Other witnesses in the area

said two men in a jeep stood guard outside while the two men on motorcycles went into the graveyard to launch the attack.

Meanwhile, police were deployed at mosques throughout Pakistan Sunday following the slaughter of 24 Shiite Muslim worshippers in eastern Punjab.

In the federal capital of Islamabad, not far from the country's largest Faisal Mosque, policemen set up roadblocks, stopped vehicles and searched for weapons.

In the eastern Punjab capital of Lahore, where the massacre occurred, provincial Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif called an emergency meeting of his law enforcement officers.

In the southern port city of Karachi, home to 14 million people and the scene of several sectarian clashes, additional security troops have been deployed.

In Karachi's old city where there is a large Shiite Muslim population, paramilitary

rangers have been deployed to provide additional security.

Throughout the country the police took out their automatic rifles to patrol their regions.

"Even in remote areas we have told the police to be on the alert and step up patrol," said a police official in Lahore, on condition that his name not be used.

Sectarian bloodletting over the past one year has left as many as 300 people dead throughout Pakistan. Most of the clashes have been between militant members of the country's rival Sunni and Shiite Muslim groups.

While most Pakistanis are Sunni Muslims, they routinely get along with their Shiite brethren. It is only the few who belong to militant sectarian groups that clash in Pakistan.

The government has passed a strict anti-terrorist laws, which gives the police sweeping powers of arrest and detention.

Thousands in shelters as winter storm pummels U.S., eastern Canada

MONTREAL (AFP) — Thousands of people in eastern Canada and the northeastern states of America huddled in emergency shelters early Sunday as they prepared to face another day of a deadly winter storm that has resulted in widespread power outages.

The storm has ravaged the region since Monday, toppling trees and power pylons. Eleven deaths are blamed on the storm in Canada, and at least four in the United States.

Some 1.2 million homes in Quebec — 40 per cent of the province's population — were without electricity and for the most part heat Saturday.

Snow and freezing rain also hit northeastern U.S. states, cutting power to nearly 500,000 inhabitants of New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont.

Over the past few days as much as four inches of ice have accumulated, bringing down power lines and damaging millions of trees, weather forecasters said.

In Quebec alone some 30,000 people were spending the night at 273 emergency shelters throughout the province.

The American Red Cross said 1,290 people were being put up in 44 shelters. More

than 5,000 people also lost their telephone service in New York state due to the storm.

In Maine 155,000 homes were without electricity, according to the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency. More than 700 people had taken refuge in 31 shelters, the Red Cross said.

Hydro-Quebec president André Caille said that branches and trees felled at least 60 power pylons. Many could not be repaired and would have to be replaced, he said.

Scores of Canadians have suffered broken bones from falling branches, and carbon monoxide poisoning from space heaters.

The weather was so bad

that Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien delayed his scheduled departure for a four-nation Latin American tour.

Mr. Chrétien had already postponed his departure by one day to Sunday because of the foul weather, and did not specify when he would leave.

Across the border in New York state, Governor George Pataki said President Bill Clinton had granted his request to declare a federal state of emergency in five winter storm-hit northern counties.

"We are dedicating every resource possible to help the people of the (state's) North Country, but it is clear we need federal assistance to respond to a disaster that far

surpasses anything we have ever seen," Mr. Pataki said in a statement.

Montreal's metro system briefly shut down and many businesses were forced to close.

Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard asked the federal government to send in 3,000 more soldiers to help the technical teams of Hydro-Quebec and rescue workers tending to residents who lost electrical service.

About 2,000 soldiers were deployed Friday to help restore electricity and staff emergency shelters in areas of southern Quebec.

Weather forecasters said the temperature was expected to drop to minus seven degrees Celsius overnight Saturday and could dip to minus 17 Celsius Monday night.

More than 60 millimetres of freezing rain has fallen on the region since Monday.

The situation was marginally better in neighbouring Ontario, where 80,000 households were without power, while 25,000 homes suffered the same fate in the maritime provinces. Insurance company officials estimated the damage from the storm at some 500 million Canadian dollars (\$350 million), making it the most costly natural disaster in Canadian history.

Kashmir rebel leader urges U.S. intervention

SRINAGAR, India (AFP) — A top Kashmiri separatist leader Sunday urged the United States to press India and Pakistan to hold "serious" talks on the disputed state.

Shabir Shah told a visiting U.S. congressional delegation that President Bill Clinton should take up the issue when he visits the Indian subcontinent later this year.

Mr. Shah, who has spent 30 of his 44 years in Indian

prisons and wants full independence for the region, said Mr. Clinton should put pressure on "the two warring countries."

"Once the positive dialogue take off, the Kashmiri representatives should be asked to join in at a later stage to find a solution."

India and Pakistan, which both administer parts of Kashmir, have fought two of their three wars over the northern province.

Pakistan wants a U.N.-

sponsored referendum to determine its future.

India, however, is flatly opposed to what it terms "external interference" on Kashmir.

It argues the state is an "integral" part of India. More than 20,000 people have died in Indian Kashmir in Muslim separatist violence since 1989.

Mr. Shah held 90-minute talks with the five U.S. officials.

Kashmir held state polls

for the first time in nine years in 1996 after the end of direct federal rule from New Delhi. National elections are due next month.

Mr. Shah said: "Here in Kashmir the problem is not forming the government but the future status of the state. Elections cannot serve any purpose."

"If elections are to be held to see if people are with us (separatists) we are ready. But let the world monitor the polls."

Four poor Asian children win millions in paternity claim

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP) — Four impoverished Asian children will get \$90 million each from the estate of a late U.S. millionaire in a paternity claim settlement, the San Francisco Examiner reported Sunday.

Larry Hillblom, founder of DHL Worldwide Express, fathered the children in his search for sex with virgin teenagers in the Philippines, Vietnam, and the island of Palau, the newspaper reported.

Eight women began lawsuits against Hillblom's estate after he died in an airplane crash in 1995.

Trustees at first denied that Hillblom was the father.

The women all held that when they were teenagers they met Hillblom at a bar, became pregnant after an affair, and were then abandoned.

Hillblom had been living on the island of Saipan since the early 1980s, though he remained an important player in the vast courier company.

Private DNA tests showed that four of the claims were legitimate.

Hillblom fathered two young Filipino girls, a Vietnamese boy, and a Palauan teenager, the

newspaper reported.

Hillblom had willed his fortune to the University of California at San Francisco medical school and had no provisions for any children.

But U.S. rules that apply to Saipan state that illegitimate children can share the wealth of a late parent unless they are specifically written out of the will.

According to court records cited by the newspaper Hillblom had women on his payroll who were in charge of securing virgins for him in Philippine bars and go-go clubs.

Thai woman escapes sex kidnappers

BANGKOK (AFP) — A 20-year-old woman drugged and kidnapped in northern Thailand escaped from her abductors in a notorious sex resort southeast of Bangkok, reports said Sunday.

The university student said she was waiting for a bus to her university in Chiang Mai when she was grabbed from behind and forced to breathe a "strong-smelling substance", the Nation daily reported.

The woman said the next thing she knew she was in a

van with five unconscious women aged from 15 to 20.

The report said she eventually escaped after one of the drivers opened the van door to check on the women. While he urinated at the roadside the university student, Areeya Wihayajan, pushed him aside and ran.

When Areeya finally stopped she realised she was in the Royal Garden shopping mall in the beach resort of Pattaya. She called her parents, who alerted the police.

Police told the Nation there were more than 100 brothels in Pattaya, which has been trying to clean up its tarnished image during the "Amazing Thailand" tourist promotion.

Police said they were looking for the other women and tracking down the kidnappers, some of whom spoke in the dialect of southern Thailand.

Prostitution is a thriving business in Thailand even though it is officially illegal.

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Making or breaking peace

CAIRO'S WARNING to Israel to reconsider its position before it is too late reflects an overall Arab position that is a direct result of continued Israeli intransigence. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa on Saturday called for an Arab meeting to discuss what to do in case the peace process collapsed. In essence, Cairo is proposing a return to the resolutions of the 1996 Arab summit in case the hoped for intervention of President Bill Clinton fails. The operative part of the 1996 summit linked continued normalisation with Israel to the extent that Israel demonstrates its willingness to abide by past agreements especially the Madrid formula that stipulates the trading of land-for-peace on the basis of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

In actual terms the fallout from a collapse in the peace process would certainly go beyond the normalisation process, itself already frozen, and may indeed push the entire region into a new climate of hostility. That is why all eyes are now focused on the Clinton's talks with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu later this month in Washington. This awesome responsibility being placed on the shoulders of President Clinton is indeed an historic one and could very well become a milestone in the annals of the entire peace process. Arab and many Israeli leaders wish that President Clinton could pull off a deal between the Palestinians and Israelis since he has all the necessary tools to attain that objective. Any pressure that he may apply on Netanyahu would find support from all Arabs, at least half of the Israeli people and most of the American Jewish community.

The Clinton administration need not operate in a vacuum. There are already in place key guidelines for it to conduct its diplomacy. In a letter to Arafat, the former U.S. secretary of state, Warren Christopher, formally guaranteed three specific Israeli pullouts from the Palestinian territories, the first on March 7, 1997, the second on Sept. 7, 1997 and the third on March 7, 1998. The U.S. envoy to the Middle East Dennis Ross has confirmed recently to the Palestinian side that his government is still committed to Christopher's pledge.

That should make the mission of President Clinton simple and straightforward. What we are talking about here is not only the Israeli undertakings and the urgent need to have them implemented but also Washington's own commitments to the process and its credibility among the parties. All that President Clinton needs to do now is to make Israel heed these commitments. Should Washington fail in this endeavour and fall into the Israeli trap of renegotiating everything that was already agreed upon, then what Cairo and other Arab capitals are sounding the alarm about could be just around the corner. Perhaps Netanyahu feels that his country is too strong militarily to take seriously the Arab threats and would prefer to put a higher premium on the acquisition of territory to make his country as wide and long as his hard-line supporters would wish it to be. If so, then the peace regime and the culture of peace that many have been trying desperately to cultivate and nurture would go down the drain and the opportunity lost for many generations to come. The stakes are therefore high. The Washington talks will either push the peace process forward or leave it lingering and awaiting its inevitable death.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Arab Al Yawm's Saleh Qallab Sunday said that with U.S. envoy Dennis Ross' failed mission to the Middle East, eyes will be focused on Washington where President Clinton is set to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat for a last ditch effort at breaking the deadlock in the peace negotiations. The criteria for Ross' failure or success in his mission clearly depends on Netanyahu's behaviour and the extent to which Washington can exert pressure on the Israeli government to abide by the peace accords. Qallab said. Had Ross succeeded in convincing Netanyahu of the need to comply with the Oslo accords and the redeployment of Israeli troops in the occupied lands, there would have been no need for the Washington meeting, he said. In his talks with the Palestinians, Ross has reportedly said that Washington is insisting that the Israelis carry out two redeployment stages and that the U.S. will not allow the peace process to be ruined, the writer said. In light of these remarks, he said, one can expect Ross to submit a report to the U.S. president summing up the outcome of his mission and recommending serious action to bring about the aspired peace.

Al Dustour's Mohammad Daoud demanded that the Lower House of Parliament examine the Tenants and Landlords Law, which, he said, is obsolete and which has been the cause of problems between owners of homes and tenants. The circumstances which existed when the present law was introduced have disappeared now, and the fact that the prices of almost everything has increased while rent charges remain the same calls for an examination of this law which tends to protect the tenants who pay very little rent, barely sufficient to enable the landlords to pay the taxes on these rented homes, said the writer. A new equitable law for both the landlords and tenants would protect both parties and prevent landlords from charging exorbitant rental fees or blackmail their tenants, he said.

After Arafat, one day

The Palestinians' leader is as mentally sharp as ever. Still working a 16-hour day. But people are beginning to wonder about the succession

YASSER ARAFAT, aged 68, takes good care of his health: he has a medical check-up most days. But at recent public appearances, he has looked pale, tremulous and exhausted. This has set rolling a great wave of speculation about the Palestinian leader's possible successors.

Nothing but Israeli gossip, designed to divert attention from the travails of the Netanyahu government, say Palestinian National Authority (PNA) spokesmen dismissively. Maybe, but the succession question raises genuine problems. Who is there to replace Mr. Arafat? The old despot holds two posts: In 1969 he was appointed chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO); in 1996 he was elected rais, or president, of the PNA.

According to the PNA's Basic Law, the presidential successor would be the current speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), Ahmad Qureia — who is also known as Abu Ala. But the law has yet to be ratified by Mr. Arafat (some say precisely because it contains this clause). And although Mr. Qureia, an economist, is one of the PLO's historic leaders, he does not have much of a political base in the West Bank or Gaza.

Moreover, Mr. Arafat's authority derives at least as much from being the PLO's chairman as from being the PNA's president. Leadership of the PLO entitles him, theoretically, to represent Palestinians "wherever they may be". The PNA's presidency is restricted to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. This organisational division between the "outside" PLO and the "inside" PNA affects the rival contenders for Mr. Arafat's throne. Should

he depart the scene soon, the men who came in from outside would still have the stronger hand. But, were the date put off, the scales would tip in favour of younger men from the occupied territories.

Of the outsiders, the most likely immediate successor would be the PLO's chief negotiator and head of international relations, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen). A founder member of Mr. Arafat's Fatah movement, Mr. Abbas rose to prominence for his part in the secret PLO-Israeli negotiations that led to the signing of the Oslo accords in September 1993. He is on good terms with Israel's opposition Labour Party, and also with Israel's security forces. He gets on well with the Americans, who deal with him as Mr. Arafat's de facto deputy. Because of these ties, he is disliked by many fellow-members in Fatah, and thoroughly distrusted by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who remember his threat to demolish their organisations after the Islamist suicide attacks in Israel in 1996.

Mr. Abbas has the support of the PNA's two powerful military chiefs, Jibril Rajoub and Mohammad Dahlan, who command the Preventive Security Force (the Palestinians are not allowed an army) in the West Bank and Gaza respectively. The authority of the two colonels comes not only from the number of men they command, running into several thousand, but also from the force's political composition. Recruited almost exclusively from the occupied territories, the force is made up mostly of young Fatah "fighters," who won their spurs during the Palestinian intifada (uprising).

Colonels Rajoub and Dahlan, who might one day be contenders for the leadership themselves, are cut from the same cloth. Both have credible histories of resisting Israel before they took on their present jobs of being "secu-

rity coordinators" with Israel. Their tough stance on Hamas has won them esteem from Israel's Shin Bet intelligence service (if not from the Likud government) and, increasingly, from America's CIA, which now sits in on security meetings between the two sides.

These names assume a succession battle based on military authority and Israeli-American patronage. The alternative would be a leader elected through democratic institutions. The Palestinians' one taste of democracy was in January 1996, when they elected the PLC. Many younger insiders hope for more of the same.

The best known insider is Faisal Hussein, the PLO's head of Jerusalem affairs. Mr. Hussein is respected and has strong ties with the Palestinians' traditional ruling and business classes. But he does not have much appeal to people living in camps or ex-prisoners or students. They tend to identify with younger Fatah leaders, such as Marwan Barghouti, the party's general secretary in the West Bank.

Politically-minded West Bankers and Gazans are familiar, from observing Israel, with the workings of democracy. For them the question is less who will replace Mr. Arafat than how he will be replaced. "In the past, Fatah earned its right to lead the national movement through the military struggle of its fighters," says Mr. Barghouti. "Now that we have a national authority on Palestinian soil, we must earn our legitimacy from the democratic choice of the people." But the institutions for that "democratic choice" are still weak. For this reason, among others, many Palestinians wish Mr. Arafat a long and healthy life.

The Economist

Human Rights File Claiming the 'sovereign act'

By Waleed M. Sadi

VARIOUS GOVERNMENTS in Jordan had rested their case on major policy decisions on the so-called "sovereign act," criterion. One can cite the decision to sever all legal and administrative relations with the West Bank, the revocation of citizenship rights of Jordanians who resided in the occupied territories, the release of Israeli agents implicated in the attempt on the life of a Hamas leader in Amman a few months ago as examples of this arbitrary use. Belatedly the same rationale was resorted to in an effort to silence the critics of the decision to take part as an observer in the search and rescue exercises of the U.S.-Turkish and Israeli navies.

This novel legal formulation has been "concocted" to put an end to any debate that may ensue over these and other issues. In other words, any time the government wants to avoid a thorough consideration of any particular policy decision, it reverts to the "sovereignty act," formula as a fall back position to nip in the bud any reconsideration of the decision. To be sure there are no precedents in international jurisprudence to this liberal application of the sovereignty argument. I dare say that even our own national jurisprudence does not lend support to this legal innovation.

What the government probably has in mind when it takes a decision on the "sovereignty basis" is the exercise of a national political judgement of supreme importance that justifies any ensuing conflict with the law. In short, the executive branch seeks to render such decisions not justiciable. The latest example of the resort to the "sovereignty act" basis was when we applied it to justify our taking part as an observer in the naval exercises of three foreign powers. It is hard to comprehend why the government felt obliged to resort to this shaky ground when in fact it did not have to in the first place. What prevents the government from taking a policy decision on whether to take part in a manoeuvre or not when it is a natural prerogative that all governments across the globe enjoy without having to improvise an elaborate and complex legal formulation for this purpose? States take such decisions all the time without the need to invent questionable legal pretexts. Whoever invented the sovereignty argument needs to reconsider it as a matter of principle. What adds insult to injury is the trend for our own judiciary to follow the same line of argument as if it is in fact an established principle of law.

The government in all its three branches would be better advised to reformulate new grounds for adopting its supreme national decisions. Suppose we say that taking such decisions is the executive prerogative of the head of state, period. The draw back of this formulation, though, rests in the probability that it cannot automatically render these decisions unjusticiable. There will come a time when we need to amend the Constitution in a bid to incorporate what we are trying to improvise in a roundabout way. Better still, we need judicial decisions by the highest courts of the land that would offer more solid legal grounds for taking such decisions in a manner that immunises them from any legal challenge.

LETTERS

We ought to know better

To the editor:

ON A TOUR especially organised for the Friends of Archaeology in the magnificent desert of Wadi Rum led by Dr. Fawzi Zayadin to visit and learn more about the ancient inscriptions and their historical significance, our group was shocked and deeply saddened by the sight of very modern red, black and white spray-painted graffiti deliberately splashed over the very ancient inscriptions and everywhere else for that matter.

The FOA organises a camping trip to Wadi Rum each year, and each year we witness more deterioration and neglect to a place we consider highly fragile and sensitive.

On this last trip also, one could not miss the amount of litter scattered all around by irresponsible campers and visitors who are only interested in having a picnic and maybe trying out their new 4-wheel drive, but caring nothing for the environment around them and expecting someone else to pick up their trash.

Yesterday I was in Jerash and I noticed that one parliamentary candidate's name had been spray-painted on several ancient Roman columns on the main road. In my opinion this person should be jailed. Will the people of Jerash respect, let alone vote for someone who so obviously abuses not only public property but archaeological sites?

Jordanians should not allow these acts and should educate their children about the importance of our historical, cultural and natural sites. It is our duty to protect our history and our environment and proudly pass it on to the next generations.

Rana S. Naber,
Friends of Archaeology
Amman

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.



U.S. to enforce new 'discriminatory' screening of airline passengers

By Ray Hanania

AFTER MORE than 8 years, the United States government has finally unveiled its plan to counter the terrorist threat "against" America. Although they won't release the details of the plan, asserting the need for security, it pretty much comes down to one simple procedure: Passengers who "look Arab" will be stopped. Those who do not, might be randomly searched.

The new policy, which takes effect this year, requires people who have Middle Eastern "looks" or whose travel patterns include Middle Eastern countries, to be taken aside at airports for an extensive search of their personal possessions, carry-on items and luggage.

A special computer will analyse information on passengers and identify those that need "special attention" at airports. Millions of dollars have

been spent on devising this plan, which advocates claim will stem the tide of airline terrorism.

The practice of profiling will augment technological safeguards that already have been installed at airports, including the installation of 54 high-tech bomb detectors and 220 trace explosive detectors. Additionally, some 238 bomb-sniffing dogs will monitor passenger movements at U.S. airports by the end of this year.

Still, the Federal Aviation Administration and a special U.S. Commission on Terrorism feels that it needs something more.

Why profile passengers? Most non-Middle Eastern Americans would not be encumbered by the profiling hassles. And, since most Middle Eastern Americans don't vote, who cares if the burden of terrorism falls on their shoulders?

Reasoned arguments against profiling continue to fall on deaf ears.

The most notable is the Timothy McVeigh factor. McVeigh is the terrorist convicted of blowing up a federal office building in Oklahoma in April, 1996. Although the visceral reaction of the U.S. justice system was to roast dozens of Arab-looking passengers travelling out of Oklahoma that day, it was an accidental encounter between an Oklahoma police officer who pulled over McVeigh's car because it didn't have a proper licence, that resulted in McVeigh's arrest when bomb-making materials and weapons were found in his car.

Picking on the Arab is easy, in the United States. Certainly, it is easier than trying to disarm the hundreds of violent American militias that operate in the American hinterlands, or stripping them of their automatic weapons.

And, the United States has to pick on someone, when its policies simply fail to achieve their goal of protecting Americans from

the acts of terrorism.

When government policies fail, government, by its nature seeks out someone to blame, besides itself.

The easiest target in America is the Arab, who lives in a disorganised cultural society fraught with internal political and social divisions, and an absence of qualified leaders.

The Israelis have a word to describe the only option that we, as Arab Americans, have in the face of this obvious form of discrimination: It's called "kvetching," or the act of whining out loud to no one in particular.

We, Arab Americans, live in a world where it is easier to criticise each other than it is to organise effectively and to speak out in support of constitutional rights that have been consistently stripped from us.

So, get ready to set aside your dignity at U.S. airports.

It's all that we Arab Americans have left to surrender these days.

Kerala model failing rural women, research shows

By Anita Johns
and Dipankar De Sarkar

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, (India) — Experts, who hold up the Indian state of Kerala as a model for development driven by enlightened women-centred policies, are being told to hold their horses.

Some worrying chinks are showing in the Kerala armour. New research shows that, in spite of remarkable achievements in social development, the effects of economic reforms are leaving rural women worse off — just as in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

Kerala — a coastal state on the southern tip of India — has for long figured among a handful of developing countries and provinces that are lauded by development agencies and experts for making strides in the areas of health, education and women's empowerment in the face of poverty.

The U.N. Development Programme (UNDP), for instance, gushes in its annual report for 1996: "With a population as large as Canada's (30 million) and despite decades of low income and low-productivity growth, Kerala has made human development gains that outstrip those of other Indian states and many developing countries." The reasons for Kerala's progress, it continues, are all replicable: Mass literacy, agrarian reform, improvement in the status of socially and economically marginalised people and an enlightened attitude towards girls' and women's education and status.

But E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the veteran Indian communist leader who in Kerala in the 1950s headed the first democratically elected communist government in the world, says: "Kerala is not an independent state. The advantages and disadvantages of

the Kerala model cannot be separated from the Indian model which is such that the poor are getting poorer while a handful of rich are getting richer."

Research by academics at the University of Manchester in Britain says that the commercialisation of agriculture (moving away from food crops towards cash crops) as part of the economic reforms introduced in India in 1991 is impoverishing women in Kerala. It is reducing female labour in agriculture. And where they are still employed, women are paid less. At the same time, cuts in government spending on the social sector threaten women's health, and even transfer some of these costs on to them by increasing their domestic duties.

The study by Shoba and Thankom G. Arun, both from Kerala, has important policy implications for all developing countries. It shows that women's needs continue to be ignored. And it shows that mere provision of nutrition, education programmes and health services have little value if they do not take into account household food supply factors — things like employment, wage rates, food prices, family food allocation and land tenure systems.

Poverty in the 1990s has, increasingly, a female face. According to a U.N. publication, "The World's Women 1970-1990", women everywhere are paid less than men, have less access to training and capital than men, work longer hours than men and, in an economic crisis, are hit harder than men. The International Fund for Agricultural Development says in a report on rural poverty: "Constrained as they are by interlinked socioeconomic factors, macro-economic policies and development strategies, rural women are triply disadvan-

tagued."

"The advantage of the Kerala model," says Mr. Namboodiripad, "is that in the agricultural, small and cottage industries sectors, it has a certain amount of elbow room particularly in the context of the decentralisation of power to the panchayats (village bodies) and urban bodies. At that level the government of Kerala can work out some programmes of development."

The panchayats are a form of local self-governance at village level. By organising regular elections, the panchayats have used their large electoral mandate to bring about large-scale land reforms which have not happened elsewhere in India. These land reforms have helped enrich marginalised peasants which in turn has helped popularise the left wing parties and broaden their power base.

Mr. Namboodiripad adds: "This will not solve all the problems because the Indian government's economic policy impoverishes the people. The source of disadvantage is the central policy while the source of advantage is the policy of the state government."

Kerala occupies a unique place in the developing world, but particularly in South Asia, where the majority of the world's poorest people live. The state has a life expectancy of 69 years for men and 72 for women compared to the national average of 60.6 and 61.7; a male-female ratio of 1,036 women to 1,000 men (the national figure is 927 women); an infant mortality rate of 13 compared to India's 73; few births per family in a nation of nearly one billion people; and a high degree of literacy, particularly of girls and women.

But, the researchers say, the reasons for these healthy human indicators are histori-

cal and political: Education and health for both boys and girls were encouraged by the erstwhile princely rulers and followed up by missionaries and socio-religious reform movements. In modern times, the state has been ruled by a coalition of left-wing political parties that has continued these programmes.

The agricultural sector, it says, has suffered from neglect and commercialisation as more and more foreign exchange from oil-rich Gulf countries (semi-skilled and unskilled Kerala labour is much sought after there) has led to a boom in the tertiary sector, such as banking and private financing. The resultant decline of agriculture in the share of the State Domestic Product (from 39.2 per cent in 1980-81 to 29.7 per cent in 1995-96) has seen the proportion of women working in agriculture falling more sharply than men.

In addition, there has been a move away from rice cultivation, which is the most labour-intensive crop in Kerala and employs more women than do coconut and rubber — both cash crops. The area under rice has declined (because of "unprofitability," according to the research) from about eight million hectares in 1980-81 to 4.7 million hectares in 1995-96. In comparison, the area under coconut grew from 6.5 million hectares to 9.8 million hectares and rubber from 2.3 million hectares to 4.5 million hectares during the same period.

But this decline in the proportion of women workers in agriculture, as a result of the penetration of cash crops, has not figured in any policy decisions. If anything, women's position has been worsened by recent social sector budget-cuts that have severely reduced the supply of subsidised food under the government's

Public Distribution System (the supply of rice, the staple in Kerala, fell from 1.4 million tonnes in 1990 to 1.1 MT in 1995). Such developments have implications for the levels of nutrition for women, especially those who are pregnant or lactating.

The Kerala findings support many previous studies from Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. "There are important differences between the situations in Africa and Asia," says Shoba Arun. "But the handicaps faced by women are the same everywhere."

Mr. Namboodiripad's reply to this is: "What will happen cannot be clearly forecast but it can certainly be said that if the state government persists with decentralised development, the disadvantages of the all-India model can be reduced."



International studies show that poverty in the 1990s has, increasingly, a female face (photo by UNICEF)

Iraq criticises composition of U.N. team

(Continued from page 1)

British make up most of the teams... and the participants in the present team are solid evidence for what we have been saying."

Alan Dacey, spokesman of the U.N. Special Commission, which oversees the monitoring work, confirmed that a weapons team had arrived Sunday but said he would not disclose nationalities of the team members.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein ordered American inspectors out of the country on Nov. 13 on grounds they were spies. The U.N. then pulled the rest of the inspectors in protest.

They were allowed to return a week later under a Russian-brokered deal.

The U.N. Special Commission is responsible for overseeing the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

The U.N. has said that trade sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait will not be lifted until the weapons are destroyed. Iraq insists that its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons have been eliminated, but U.N. weapons inspectors have repeatedly accused the Iraqi regime of hiding information and materials related to weapons-making.

Mr. Ritter has led anti-concealment missions in the past. Iraq has responded by labelling him "a troublemaker," especially for efforts to get into sites they have declared off-limits. These include presidential palaces and other so-called sensitive sites.

INA said that "as long as the issue of balancing the teams is not respected, Iraq stresses its serious reservations on the statements and conclusions of the Special Commission."

Also Sunday, Hussam Mohammad Amin, head of Iraq's National Monitoring Committee, said that U.N. inspectors had carried out 607 inspections since they returned Nov. 21.

The figures do not match those kept by the U.N. Special Commission, which accounts for inspections is a different way.

Mr. Amin said that two biological weapons inspection teams currently were working in the country, one headed by a German and the other by an American.

Iraq calls for oil firms to seal contracts

(Continued from page 1)

medicine while the rest goes to a compensation fund for Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait and to pay for the work of U.N. weapons inspectors.

Mr. Saleh said the \$1.3 billion allocated for humanitarian supplies was "only a drop in the ocean," compared to the needs of Iraq's 22 million population which has been under sanctions for more than seven years.

On Wednesday, Iraq started to pump oil ready for export via Turkey and the Gulf after a month-long break, following U.N. approval of a new distribution plan for the imports.

Oil Minister General Amer Rashid said at the time that tankers would start lifting oil "early next week."

Iraq was in contact with foreign oil companies, "specifically from friendly countries." He said priority would go to countries which support a lifting of the U.N. sanctions, although U.S. companies were among Baghdad's previous clients. Iraq itself suspended oil exports on Dec. 5 to protest delays in the delivery of food and medicine under the oil-for-food accord. It linked the resumption of oil sales to U.N. approval of the distribution plan. Russia was Iraq's top client during the second term of the accord, followed by Turkey and European countries such as France. But U.S. companies were also takers of Iraqi oil.

Due to weather conditions, Arafat postpones visit until Tuesday

(Continued from page 1)

thrown the Israeli government into a crisis, might delay for months hopes of progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track.

Mr. Netanyahu was quoted as saying that his government will carry only one pull out from the West Bank and not three as stipulated in the 1993 Oslo interim peace agreement between the two sides. "This is a violation to all what have been agreed upon," said Mr. Khatib. "This man [Netanyahu] does not want to make peace."

"We urge all brotherly and friendly states to support our cause against Israel's obstinate stance and to maintain pressure on Israel."

Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai will visit Egypt and Jordan soon for talks on the troubled peace process, his spokesman said on Sunday, giving no specific date.

With Mr. Levy's resignation, Mr. Mordechai has become the leading moderate in the Israeli government.

diplomats said.

He has threatened to quit the government unless the pullback was carried out within three months.

Meanwhile, a senior Palestinian negotiator met on Sunday with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and briefed him on the outcome of Mr. Ross' talks with Palestinian officials.

Mahmoud Abbas told Jordan Television that his short visit was also to pave the way for Mr. Arafat's upcoming visit to the Kingdom and his scheduled meeting with Mr. Clinton.

Dr. Majali told the Palestinian official that Jordan was ready to "extend whatever possible" to enable the Palestinians to regain their rights on their national soil. The prime minister also stressed on the need to refrain from any unilateral actions that would worsen the peace making environment in the region because "peace should be based on mutual understanding and respect between the concerned parties."

Israeli cabinet debates long list of demands to be presented to PNA

(Continued from page 1)

inciteful statements against Israel and that the PNA end its alleged activities in occupied Arab east Jerusalem.

Mr. Netanyahu apparently intends to add the document to a security agreement worked out between Israeli, Palestinian and U.S. security officials last month as part of a package deal that was to include a significant Israeli troop pullback from the West Bank.

Mr. Netanyahu refused to sign that security deal, in part because it included references to Israel's obligation to crack down on Jewish militants.

Since coming to office in June 1996, Mr. Netanyahu has frozen implementation of interim autonomy agreements with the Palestinians, claiming that the self-rule government had failed to honour its obligation to crack down on Islamist activists and

other opponents of peace.

President Arafat says he is respecting his commitments while Mr. Netanyahu is violating the spirit and letter of peace agreements by failing to cede more land to Palestinian rule while expanding Jewish settlements in occupied areas.

During his meeting with the cabinet, Mr. Netanyahu said that the threat of violence would not affect Israel's stance toward the Palestinians.

stalling for time in order to build more settlements before talks move ahead.

During Mr. Ross' four-day visit, the Netanyahu government revealed tentative plans to double the number of units in Jewish settlements over the next two decades.

"Obviously he has been unable to affect any change in the

Israeli attitude," Ms. Ashrawi said of Mr. Ross. "We did not see any effective political will from Dennis Ross... to hold Israel accountable."

Ms. Ashrawi said the success of the separate summits to be held in Washington between President Clinton, Mr. Netanyahu and President Arafat later this month hinges on the amount of U.S. pres-

sure exerted on Israel.

She said the Palestinians will avoid "secondary issues," such as a Palestinian airport and planned industrial zones, and instead will focus on the major issues: Further redeployments, curbing settlement-building, security arrangements and implementation of interim accords.

Palestinians accuse U.S. of siding with Israel, warn of bringing region to 'brink of disaster'

(Continued from page 1)

The prime minister said any troop withdrawals depended on the Palestinian National Authority meeting Israeli conditions, especially in cracking down on anti-Israel activist groups.

The Palestinian cabinet said in a statement it was cooperating with U.S. efforts, but accused Israel of

stalling for time in order to build more settlements before talks move ahead.

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Arab Gulf states seen needing deeper bourses to fund growth

MUSCAT (R) — Arab Gulf states should set up a stock market commission to develop the region's bourses as a tool to fund regional development, a Bahrain official has said.

Commerce Ministry adviser Fawzi Behzad also proposed a central Gulf clearing house, at least 49 per cent foreign participation in local stocks and a clear-cut privatisation plan to deepen the region's markets.

He told an investment conference the proposed securities commission should devise unified laws for Gulf stock markets, introduce

new instruments and facilitate active cross-trading.

Most bourses in regional states — Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — limit trade to common stock. Liquidity is low, the shareholder base is narrow and foreign investment is mostly limited to Arab Gulf nationals.

Mr. Behzad said although Gulf equity markets had grown fast in the past few years, a lot more needed to be done.

"Despite the accumulated wealth that was generated with the increase of oil revenues from 1974 to 1997,

the capital markets of the Gulf remain small in size and less important to the development of the region in comparison to other markets," he added.

He said from 1994 to mid-1997 Gulf market capitalisation had grown 75 per cent to \$130 billion. But this only represented 0.64 per cent of global stock market capitalisation at end-1996.

Economists say about \$10 billion needs to be spent annually over the next decade to upgrade the Gulf's basic infrastructure.

The state-run economies are trying to encourage the private sector to take a lead

in funding as governments, stung by past overspending, are now less willing to finance large projects.

Obstacles to deeper Gulf stock markets included a lack of unified capital market legislation, red tape and the fact that securities laws do not cater for instruments like investment funds, currency warrants and futures and options, Mr. Behzad said.

Poorly defined laws on disclosure and small investor protection and the lack of a regulatory framework were other hurdles, he said.

Kuwait to sell stakes in local firms worth \$1.6 billion

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) —

State fund manager Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) has said it plans to sell stakes in 10 companies worth more than \$1.6 billion by the end of 1998, as part of a programme of self-offs.

"We have around 10 remaining holdings with a value of around 500 million dinars (\$1.64 billion)," KIA managing director Ali Rashid Al Bader told AFP.

"Those should be privatised from now until the end of 1998, if the market conditions make it possible," he said.

KIA, which manages the state's assets, is overseeing a programme to sell stakes in companies which mainly fell into government hands in the 1980s when the state stepped in to shore up the economy after a share market crash.

"So far we sold our holdings in 24 companies" raising about 900 million dinars (\$2.95 billion), Mr. Bader said. The programme began in 1994.

In addition to the 10 companies, KIA plans to sell in

1998, KIA is still holding on to stakes worth about 500 million dinars in three other companies which have a monopoly in the market.

Stakes in Mobile Telecommunications Company (MTC), Livestock and Transport Company and the Islamic bank Kuwait Finance House will only be sold once competition has been introduced, Mr. Bader said.

MTC will soon have a competitor in the mobile telephones sector with the establishment of National Telecommunications Company.

Registration for shares in the new mobile telephone operator closed last week, and checking the applications is expected to be completed this month.

KIA has a 24 per cent stake in the new firm, while the balance was offered to the public, Mr. Bader said. KIA's stakes in both MTC and the new firm will go on sale once "we are confident there is no monopoly."

Asia needs stronger policies to return to high growth — IMF chief

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Michel Camdessus has said that Asia's long-term fundamentals remained favourable despite the continuing financial turmoil in the region.

But he called for strong policies to ward off future crises, saying it would be a mistake to blame market forces alone for the financial troubles.

"Recent developments have not wiped out past achievements," Mr. Camdessus said in a speech.

"On the contrary, the region's long-term fundamentals — including its high domestic savings rates, strong fiscal position, dynamic private sectors and competitiveness — remain favourable," he emphasised.

With appropriate policy

adjustments, the region would be able to rekindle in a more sustainable way high rates of growth in the coming years, Mr. Camdessus said.

Asia's "tiger" economies have been swept by turmoil since Thailand devalued the baht in July, starting a contagion which has driven other regional currencies to record lows and led to capital flight.

"We all have been troubled by developments in the Thai economy, both because they have been so costly for Thailand and its neighbours and because they were so preventable," Mr. Camdessus said.

"The developments in the Thai economy undermined conditions in neighbouring countries," he added.

He said Asian countries which had not sought IMF

assistance had similar troubles as Thailand — overvalued real estate markets, weak banking sectors, poor supervision and large foreign currency borrowing.

"Market doubts were compounded by a general lack of transparency — about the extent of government and central bank liabilities," he said.

Mr. Camdessus also pointed to "the rush by domestic corporations" to borrow heavily in foreign currencies while failing to anticipate foreign exchange fluctuations and depending on "inefficient banking systems."

"It would be a mistake to blame hedge funds or other market participants for the turmoil in Asia," Mr. Camdessus said, adding the turbulent markets were "only a symptom of more

serious underlying problems."

Mr. Camdessus called for early action to correct "macroeconomic imbalances" before they precipitate a crisis, which "did not happen in Thailand, despite timely and vigorous warnings."

He called for an appropriate foreign exchange rate regime, an orderly liberalisation of capital flows and stronger supervision and supporting reforms to promote domestic competition.

"Ultimately, the crisis in Asia underlines the need of an orderly liberalisation of capital flows to ensure that a greater number of countries can benefit from access to international capital markets," the IMF chief concluded.

Asian crisis seen shaving 0.5% from world growth

LONDON (AFP) — The

financial turmoil in East Asia will shave 0.5 per cent from world economic growth in 1998, with continental Europe the most exposed region after Asia, U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers has forecast.

The global economy will expand by 2.5 per cent next year, according to the bank.

"Apart from Asia itself, the most exposed region is continental Europe, whose recovery is not yet fully established," the bank's global chief economist, John Llewellyn, said.

Any slowdown in growth would be unhelpful for Europe, which is grappling with record unemployment as it gears up for the launch of the common European currency in January 1999.

The bank predicts that growth in Europe in 1998 will be cut by 0.25-0.5 percentage points to 2.25-2.5 per

cent.

U.S. growth looks stronger in the future than Lehman Brothers anticipated at the start of the Asian crisis in July, but the upward revision it would have made is largely cancelled out by the effects of the turmoil.

The United States is now expected to post growth of 2.5 per cent in 1998. The U.S. economy grew by 3.3 per cent in the third quarter of this year.

Lehman Brothers said growth in Japan, whose moribund economy is under pressure from domestic banking troubles and the weakness of major Japanese export markets in South East Asia, will more than halve to one per cent, from 2.5 per cent previously forecast.

In Asia, excluding Japan and Australia, growth will be cut by four percentage points to 3.5 per cent, the bank forecast.

German economy set for growth of 2.5 %

BERLIN (AFP) — The German economy is likely to grow by 2.5 per cent this year, a forecasting institute has said, but a newspaper report warned that unemployment might reach a new post-war high of five million in February.

The DIW institute said gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 2.2 per cent last year.

Its forecast of 2.5 per cent for 1998 GDP growth is less optimistic than figures advanced by the government, which has said the

economy will grow by up to 3.0 per cent this year and that data for last year would show output had increased by about 2.5 per cent.

The DIW figures were also less optimistic than the average advanced toward the end of last year by Germany's six leading economic institutes, of which the DIW is one. That data put growth in 1997 at 2.4 per cent and in 1998 at 2.8 per cent.

But the DIW forecast that unemployment would continue to increase this year to a rate of 11.8 per cent from

11.4 per cent last year.

Meanwhile, the Frankfurter Rundschau newspaper reported that in December about 4.5 million people were unemployed, representing an increase of about 180,000 from the figure for November.

The figure for December is about 350,000 greater than that for December 1996, the newspaper said, quoting initial estimates from the labour office. The official figures are to be published Friday.

The DIW institute forecast

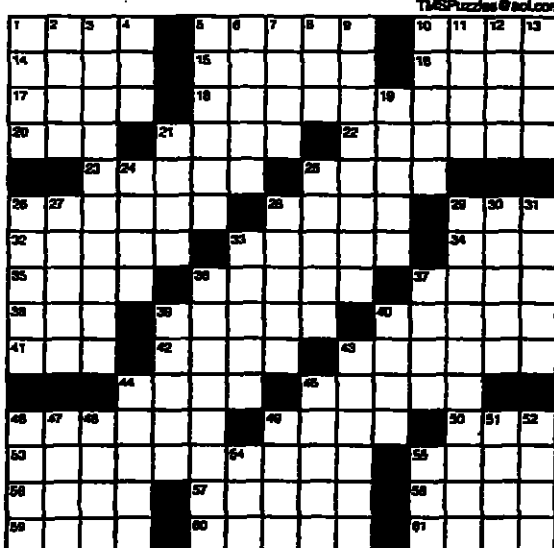
a further widening of the difference in unemployment rates in the east and west of the country, with the rate in the east of the country reaching 19.9 per cent and that in the west 9.8 per cent respectively.

The Frankfurter Rundschau forecast that "if the figures (for unemployment) rise this winter at the same speed as at the beginning of 1997, the psychological threshold of five million unemployed people will be reached in February."

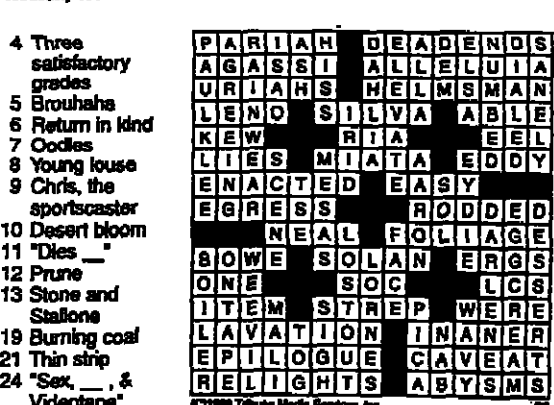
THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- 1 Memorable periods
- 5 Painter Hals
- 10 Nervous putter's melody
- 14 Holes in golf greens
- 15 Piece of history
- 16 River of Russia
- 17 Ocho
- 18 Jamaica
- 19 Pharmacist
- 20 Chapel Hill sch.
- 21 Skeddadle
- 22 Hosts
- 23 Put to rest
- 25 Hoops grp.
- 26 Child and Roberts
- 28 Reebok rival
- 29 False front
- 32 Up to now
- 33 Clerk, at times
- 34 Bear hand
- 35 Litter
- 36 Fairy-tale villain
- 37 Time long past
- 38 Sounds of
- 39 Q-tips, e.g.
- 40 Squander
- 41 Change color
- 42 Vocal infection
- 43 Preserved one way
- 44 Baldwin or Guinness
- 45 Rot-resistant wood
- 46 Wheeled
- 48 Nobelist Wiesel
- 50 Slangy intensifier suffix
- 53 Sorry
- 55 Mirrored
- 56 Sup
- 57 Summon
- 58 Herringlike fish
- 59 Visualizes
- 60 Polonius, Lear's, et al.
- 61 Farm layers



By Eugene R. Pustenberg
Raritan, VA.



- 4 Three satisfactory grades
- 5 Brothless
- 6 Return in kind
- 7 Oodles
- 8 Young louse
- 9 Chris, the sportscaster
- 10 Desert bloom
- 11 Dies
- 12 Prune
- 13 Stone and Stallone
- 19 Burning coal
- 21 Thin strip
- 24 Sex, , & Videotape
- 25 Smith and Clark
- 26 Polled fun
- 27 Money lending
- 28 Tearful woman
- 29 Punctuation mark
- 30 Maniche
- 31 Winter wool
- 33 French money
- 36 Doubly dangerous
- 37 Ivy League school
- 39 Small Florida college
- 40 Walk in water
- 43 Pizza portions
- 44 Bars between wheels
- 45 The same
- 46 Scoundrels
- 47 Mayberry boy
- 48 Top of the line
- 49 English boys' school
- 51 Low fat
- 52 Annexas
- 54 Gabor sister
- 55 Blond shade

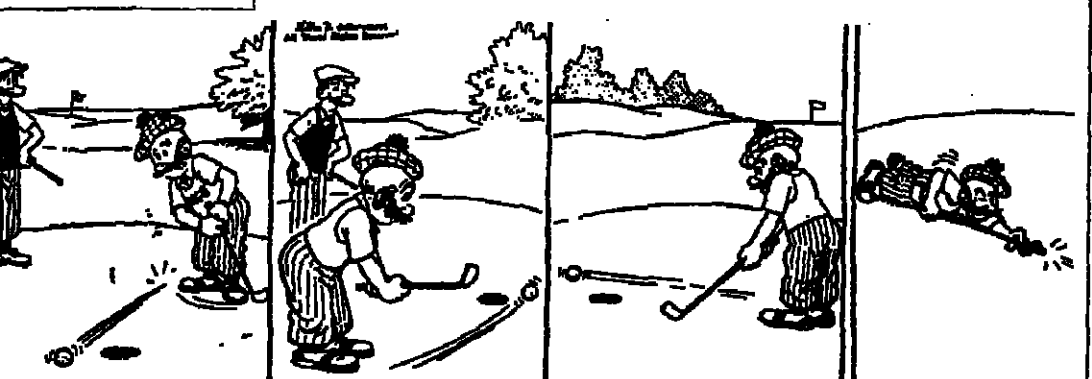
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) There sure is something going on at home, and things will never be the same after this. You're all in fabulous moods, so the destruction will produce beneficial results. The more friends you have to help, the more fun it will be. It wouldn't hurt to appoint someone construction foreman. You do need to stay organized.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) A neighbour or relative needs a shoulder to cry on. You're always calm, sympathetic and good at making decisions. That's something your friend is having trouble with right now. He or she can't figure out what to do next. To you, it'll be obvious. But try not to laugh; the situation could easily be reversed.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There's money or something else valuable coming to you. Put it straight into savings and you'll have a nice nest egg when you get old. Don't loan it to a friend in need, no matter how desperate his or her situation seems to be. There's no point in both of you getting into financial difficulties.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You're looking very good to people with influence and status. You're also under scrutiny from an older person who could give you an excellent opportunity. Make it a point to hang out with the best crowd in town, just in case. Don't be shy. You've got it, so you might as well flaunt it. It pays to advertise.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) New information needs to be kept secret for a while. If a certain friend or loved one finds out, the news will be all over town by nightfall. Be available to one who needs to talk, but make sure it's understood that the conversation will go on further. This puts you under a bit of pressure, but you can handle it.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) This is an excellent day for a party. Is it somebody's birthday? If you don't have anything planned, you could get your favourite group together in a nanosecond. They'll all be in the mood. But the party's probably not at your house — more likely you're all of doing something fun together. Skiing, anyone?

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) If you're watching for the opportunity, you'll notice it when it arrives today. This will be a request you don't know how to fill. That means you'll have to learn quickly. In the meantime, you'll develop your new skills. Go ahead and push yourself. It'll be fun.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) The urge to travel will be overwhelming today. Why resist? Even better, get yourself to a location that's either near or on the water. Fishing, anyone? If you're with the right person, that's one of the most romantic things you could do. Avoid a meaningless argument this evening.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) A thrifty neighbour can help you make a purchasing decision. You just walk into the store and buy whatever's on the shelf. Not so with your older friend. He or she knows how to stretch a nickel. That's a handy skill to learn, and conditions are right. With the money you save, you can buy something you've been thinking about.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Sometimes you get so busy you don't make time for the people you hold most dear. You think they'll understand, but they don't. That could be noticeable today. Put in the correction before you get the criticism. That will make a good impression on everyone concerned, and be a big surprise to some of them.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Take care of somebody else today. You've been busy lately and this person has been a little neglected. Don't let this one get by you. It's important to show that you care in more ways than just talking about it. What counts today is your actions. Just show up and provide something that's needed.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Love affairs, games of chance, and relationships with children are all favoured. What a marvellous way to spend a Monday afternoon. You hereby have permission to act like a little kid yourself. If you're in a romantic relationship, spend the day exploring the possibilities.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

CURCO

INJOT

DITORR

WAHIE

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: C O O R T H E

Yesterday's Jumble: FEINT BARGE STURDY PRYING

Answer: How the architect got promoted — BY DESIGN

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Provident funds get an average two per cent return on investments

**** DESPITE THE** large size and high importance of provident funds in Jordan, their annual investment returns have ranged from below zero to a maximum of eight per cent. However, a study has estimated the average return at only two per cent.

The study attributed the main reasons for these bad results to the fact that most of the money were not invested for long-term periods. "Contrary to what has been expected, the assets of these funds were in the form of short-term investments such as bank deposits," the study that covered around 80 provident funds around the country said.

When adding the assets of the Social Security Corporation (SSC), the provident funds of retired personnel account for 23.3 per cent of the gross domestic product or a total amount of JD1.2 billion. As such,

these funds represent 35.2 per cent of the market value of company shares traded at the stock exchange (Amman Financial Market).

In conclusion, two types of provident funds were highlighted by the study. The first included those which were very conservative in their investments as the focus has been on short-term deposits at banks. The second type were those provident funds which were managed by the management of the companies themselves and, as such, personal interest factors were involved.

As an example, some companies resorted to use large amounts of their provident funds to buy shares in subsidiary or affiliated firms. Such a method creates a risk much higher than taking a diversified investment approach (Al Ra'i).

Government considering restrictions on using cellular phones by officials

**** THE MINISTRY OF Finance** has recommended to the Prime Ministry a proposal to rationalise the use of cellular phones by government officials and that prior official approval be obtained in this regard.

Finance Minister Suleiman Hafez indicated that the government intends to limit the number of cellular phones currently being used and also limit the amounts

being paid monthly for such usage by government officials. He stressed that the state budget requires that spending be within the necessary, available and officially-specified limits.

The minister said a government official can carry more than one cellular phone but that should be at his own private expense without any financial obligation on the government's budget (Al Ra'i).

UAE stocks set to surge after gaining \$9 billion

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) stock market will maintain its upward swing in 1998 after gaining more than \$9 billion in value in the previous year, dealers have predicted.

A new share issue for the Middle East's biggest free storage zone will combine with the creation of more companies and strong corporate performance to boost the market to another record level, they said.

"We are ahead of another record year because of new share issues and another year of good results," stockbroker Zuhair Kaswani told AFP.

"A key factor will be the long-awaited flotation of the shares of the Saadiyat zone, the biggest-ever share issue in the UAE," he said.

The Saadiyat island free zone, which will house more than 60 basic commodities and trading halls, has a capital of around \$3.3 billion.

Abu Dhabi officials have said most of the capital would be raised through

public subscription, scheduled to start within weeks.

It will be the biggest public share issue in the Gulf country and officials expect strong demand by local and international investors.

The establishment of three new companies in 1997, coupled with more share floatations by existing institutions and strong corporate performance boosted UAE market capitalisation to a record 90 billion dirhams (\$24.5 billion), up by \$9.1 billion over 1996.

The increase turned the UAE into the second biggest stock market in the Arab World after the Saudi exchange, capitalised at around \$50 billion.

"It was the biggest-ever increase in capitalisation. The main reasons are the establishment of new firms, the high share return compared with interest rates, and an economic upswing due to high oil prices," Mr. Kaswani explained.

The UAE does not have an official exchange but plans to set up a floor, possibly this year. Share dealing is

currently conducted by telephone through a handful of authorised stockbrokers and around 35 national banks and companies trade their shares daily.

Dealers estimated turnover, the value of traded shares, totalled between 2.5 and three billion dirhams (\$681-\$817 million) in 1997.

The figure is dwarfed by the stocks turnover in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, where it exceeds \$5 billion a year each.

Traders attributed the low level of share trading in the UAE to the absence of a formal exchange, restriction of dealing to nationals, a tendency for long-term investment and the huge ownership by the government, which does not trade.

UAE companies have not yet released annual results for 1997, but banks are expected to boost net profits by more than 15 per cent.

Such a performance was reflected in the banks' shares, which rose by at least 10 per cent in 1997.

Marks and Spencer makes its entry into Arab World

[DUBAI] (AFP) — The British retailer Marks and Spencer founded by a Polish-born Jew has made its entry into the Arab World, with the crown prince of this Gulf emirate cutting the ribbon at a store in the trading hub of Dubai.

Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, who is also defence minister of the United Arab Emirates, was given a tour of the 2,700 square metre (29,000 sq. feet) store at the opening Saturday night.

The ceremony was marked by an "iftar" of dates and fruit juices, the traditional break to the dawn-to-dusk fast during the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Michael Stanier, regional manager for the Gulf, said stores in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar would follow. But Saudi Arabia, the largest market in the region, was the exception.

"We haven't done enough research on Saudi Arabia

yet," he told AFP.

Marks and Spencer, with almost 300 stores in 30 countries, was founded by partners Michael Marks, who ran market stalls, and English cashier Tom Spencer. It has long been on an Arab boycott list because of its business in Israel.

But the company, although it has several stores in the Jewish state, has "no special connection to Israel ... It is run purely as a commercial enterprise," Stanier said.

He said a total of 162 companies had applied as potential regional Arab partners for Marks and Spencer in the Middle East.

Because of the boycott, Arab tourists returning from Britain have in the past cut out the labels from clothes bought at Marks and Spencer. Stanier said the store was now aiming to capitalise on "the Arab love of the brand."

Polls show most Japanese firms expect severe situation in 1998

TOKYO (AFP) — A series of polls on Japan's economic outlook show that Japanese business leaders have no illusions about 1998 which, they say, will be as bad as 1997 if not worse.

The Mainichi Shimbun said more than 80 per cent of Japan's leading companies expect the domestic economy to stall or worsen in

1998, with many complaining that government's actions so far have been too weak.

Of the 103 companies surveyed, 44 per cent said the economy would deteriorate this year while 41 per cent said it would remain at a standstill, according to the poll published by the national daily.

Asked about the latest government's measures to avert financial system crisis, 58 per cent of the companies said they were "insufficient," the daily said.

The poll, conducted in late December, showed pessimism among business leaders was widespread despite the latest government's income tax cuts and a

plan to use public funds to help banks.

Among the top executives of 104 corporations polled, 32 said they had experienced tighter lending by banks, illustrating financial institutions' cautious stance in making loans to even major companies, the daily said.

The poll also showed the negative impact of the corpo-

rate pessimism on employment, with 35 companies reducing their labour force from a year ago, compared with only 11 firms which boosted their staff, it said.

Separate surveys showed similar results.

A poll conducted by Kyodo News Agency in mid-December showed 83 per cent of 100 key Japanese companies expected the economy to remain at a standstill or continue to decline in 1998.

The news agency received responses from the president, chief executive or equivalent of leading firms such as Toyota Motor Corp., Honda Motor Co. Ltd., Toshiba Corp., Sumitomo Bank Ltd. and Bridgestone Corp.

The survey found 45 per cent of the companies expected the economy to stall, with 38 per cent seeing a further decline and 17 expecting a slow recovery.

No companies in the poll expect a brisk recovery, it said.

As for measures to reinvigorate the economy, 36 of the managers said more income tax cuts were immediately needed to spur consumer spending, it said.

More than 90 per cent of the managers support the use of public funds to rescue ailing financial firms, in sharp contrast to feelings of the general public, 56 per cent of whom opposed such a move in a late-1997 survey, it said.

Tokyo Shimbun said Saturday nearly all major domestic companies in its poll shared a sense of growing economic crisis, a sharp change from largely optimistic views six months ago.

The survey, conducted around the same time with 207 major firms, indicated the government and the Bank of Japan were being too optimistic in their economic assessment, the daily said.

After maintaining the economy was in a gradual recovery phase, government officials began downgrading their economic judgement.

The Business of Information									
Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	MLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.6225	0.6702	1.4786	132.10	1.4300	1791.00	2.0530	6.0988
DE Mark	0.6167	1.0000	0.5478	0.8932	72.48	0.7844	962.45	1.1287	3.3465
GB Sterling	1.5125	2.5377	1.0000	2.3852	212.32	2.3068	2887.99	3.3105	9.9343
CH Franc	0.6772	1.2334	0.4196	1.0000	69.44	0.9678	1212.10	1.3834	4.1276
JP Yen	0.0076	1.3786	0.4680	1.1169	1.0000	1.0817	13.55	185.30	4.6133
CA Dollar	0.6983	1.2741	0.4333	1.0324	1.08	1.0000	1.4383	2.2637	6.9343
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0173	0.3461	0.8824	1357.22	0.7982	1.0000	11.46	3.4043
NL Guilder	0.4871	0.8711	0.3018	0.7191	84.30	0.8960	871.74	1.2985	3.9885
FR Franc	0.1640	0.2987	0.1016	0.2494	21.54	0.2344	33.66	33.6500	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7506	0.3770	3.6408	0.3091	3.6727	1527.00	3.3880
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2900	0.5317	5.1361	0.4317	5.1901	2163.74	4.7786
Saudi Riyal	0.2668	0.1890	1.0000	0.1005	0.97	0.0816	0.98	407.13	0.9033
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8906	9.3485	1.0000	9.55	0.8119	9.74	4050.40	8.9887
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1947	1.0302	1.0000	1.03	0.0841	1.01	419.41	0.9306
Kuwait Dinar	3.2688	2.3162	12.2629	1.2316	11.89	1.0000	12.00	4888.67	0.9306
Emirates Dinar	0.3723	0.1930	1.0212	1.0000	0.9913	0.8833	1.0000	416.77	0.9225
Lebanese/1000	0.85	0.4843	2.4582	0.2489	2.3843	0.2006	2.4062	1.0000	2.2187
Egyptian	0.2962	0.2093	1.1070	0.1113	1.0746	0.0803	1.0840	450.71	1.0000

Energy									
Oil	Last	Previous							
Brent	16.39	16.66							
WTI	16.32	16.59							
Bornay	16.38	16.66							
Dubai	13.96	13.97							
UL Gas	165.00	164.00							

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY				
SAR Riyal	0.2668	0.4881	0.1835	0.3839	35.2473				
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.1963	0.1688	0.4023	35.9958				
KW Dinar	3.2688	2.3162	2.2583	4.8262	431.965				
BH Dinar	0.3770	0.1930	1.0212	3.2003	350.421				
CY Pound	1.8933	1.1664	2.7543	246.406					

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Period	1-3	3-6	6-9	9-12	12-18	18-24	24-36	36-48	48-60
US Dollar	5.47	6.50	6.53	6.53	6.56				
GBP	7.34	7.44	7.31	7.31	7.31				
JPY	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.37				
DEM	3.58	3.60	3.58	3.58	3.48				
FRF	3.56	3.59	3.57	3.58	3.75				
CHF	0.93	1.12	1.25	1.39	1.49				
ITL	6.94	5.96	5.54	5.19	5.02				

Main Equity Indices									
Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cts			
New York	DOW JONES	7580.42	-22.2	-2.85	7800.13	7627.38	7802.82		
New York	S&P 500	927.88	-28.36	-2.97	966.05	921.72	966.05		
London	FTSE 100	5138.3	-48.8	-0.94	5230.1	5125.4	5237.1		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	14895.5	-24.08	-0.16	15065.5	14724.3	15019.2		
Paris	CAC 40	2918.81	-35.13	-1.19	2941.89	2902.13	2964.84		
Frankfurt	DAX	4226.84	-110.29	-2.54	4268.59	4220.01	4347.23		

Energy									
Commodity	Last	Spot							
Coffee (c/lb)	172.67	Spot							
Cocoa (c/lb)	1589	Spot							
Sugar (c/lb)	301.5	Spot							
Wheat (c/lb)	105	Spot							
Soybeans (c/lb)	24.5	Spot							
Tea (c/lb)	168	Spot							
Barley (c/lb)	0	Spot							
Rice (c/lb)	370	Spot							

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	Buy	Sell							
US Dollar	0.708	0.710							
GB Sterling	1.1408	1.1455							
DE Mark	0.389	0.3899							
CH Franc	0.4788	0.4812							
FR Franc	0.1168	0.1165							
JP Yen	0.5383	0.538							
NL Guilder	0.3444	0.3461							
IT Lira	0.3945	0.3968							

ABU DHABI FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CHARTER - AMMAN - JORDAN											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607173											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 11/01/1998											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / S	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
348,000	250,000	ABU DHABI BANK	14.9	1.23	10	420	136055	324.00	-		
2,340	1,560	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	5	0.00	4	2150	4641	1.83	1.82 -01		
2,540	1,600	BANK OF JORDAN	5.1	0.00	10	7210	1101	1.53	1.53 -03		
1,300	850	MID. EAST INV. BK.	8.0	0.00	1	100	105	1.11	1.05 -06		
2,680	1,650	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.1	6.18	8	2650	4495	1.70	1.69 -01		
2,300	1,610	THE HOUSING BK.	19.5	3.73	5	1750	9079	1.24	1.20 -04		
1,180	810	JOR. COMMER. BK.	10.9	0.00	10	4510	1070	2.38	2.38 -04		
980	620	JOR. SOLF. BANK	4.0	10.45	3	2000	1340	68	67 -01		
6,050	2,250	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	12.1	4.05	13	2025	4822	2.34	2.37 -01		
2,500	2,300	JOR. INV. FID. BANK	14.6	1	1	230	220	2.20	2.20 -		
1,770	870	HEIL AL-MAG. (AMMAN)	5	17.24	1	250	218	88	87 -01		
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 231.34	CHNG: -0.14	64	61713	259158				
2,050	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.3	5.18	8	2460	4755	1.93	1.93 -		
8,800	7,900	JOR. HOTEL TOURISM	12.2	1.30	3	13300	121698	8.34	8.48 -12		
2,160	2,480	KINGS MIDDLE	17.9	0.39	2	1270	308	3.58	3.74 -17		
4,050	4,110	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	33.1	0.00	4	1500	675	43	45 -02		
6,500	2,890	ABU DHABI INV. FID.	10.3	0.00	4	1850	7277	3.90	3.94 -04		
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 116.86	CHNG: +0.23	21	21370	133481				
4,430	2,780	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.5	2.61	7	427082	129988	3.05	3.05 -		
11,180	9,200	JOR. PETRO. INDUSTRIES	10.2	0.03	31	2008	11181	10.45	10.45 -10		
4,700	3,440	ABU DHABI BANK	12.0	4.81	31	7786	13844	4.34	4.34 -02		
630	440	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	4	9050	2323	44	46 -		
710	510	NATIONAL BANK	5	0.00	10	2950	59	59	59 -		
620	530	JOR. SOLFO. BANK	4	0.00	3	1500	885	59	59 -		
1,610	1,150	ABU DHABI BANK	15.3	8.81	5	700	463	1.23	1.20 -03		
1,800	1,820	WATV. WOOD INDUS.	8	11.00	4	12108	58	89	89 -		
1,410	1,490	JOR. TEL. SERVICES	9.7	11.69	5	2950	2164	73	72 -01		
960	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.3	0.00	8	2450	2205	90	90 -		
1,300	1,080	INTL. TELECOMM	6.6	0.00	6	8180	9780	1.20	1.20 -		
860	770	ABU DHABI BANK	32.4	0.00	9	4500	328	73	73 -01		
840	810	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	17	17900	10923	62	62 -		
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 113.55	CHNG: +0.01	121	696354	1390297				
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 187.26	CHNG: -0.07	208	579341	1788136				
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 11/01/1998											
#	1,000	1,000	JOR. INTL. INSURANCE CO	#	0.00	2	17150	27150	1.00	1.00 -	
#	610	340	JOR. CRAN. FAC.	#	0.00	4	3690	36	36	36 -	
#	1,450	1,040	ABU DHABI DEV. INVESTMENT	#	0.00	2	170000	170000	1.24	1.18 -06	
#	800	640	UNION INV. SOF.	#	0.00	3	13500	2530	70	71 -01	
#	770	360	ABU DHABI INV. SOF.	#	0.00	8	21500	570	50	50 -	
#	1,000	720	AL-SABAH INV. CO.	#	0.00	1	2000	1840	92	92 -	
#	1,000	1,000	SPECIALIZED JOR. TST	#	0.00	1	1000	750	1.00	1.00 -	
#	2,320	1,090	CENTURY INV. GROUP	#	0.00	7	80500	9445	2.00	1.95 -05	
#	350	140	JOR. TOURISM DEVELOP.	#	0.00	1	810	17	17	17 -	
#	650	440	ABU DHABI FOOD & MED.	#	0.00	3	104	47	47	46 -01	
#	530	280	ABU DHABI INV. TRD.	#	0.00	2	1250	363	29	29 -	
#	380	380	WATV. WOOD INDUS. (AMMAN)	#	0.00	20	130500	685	68	68 -	
#	470	240	INDUS. ENG.	#	0.00	3	6250	1813	28	29 -01	
#	630	870	INDUS. CERAMIC	#	15.7	0.00	1	250	150	57	60 -02
#	790	980	ADVANCED PETRO. IND.	#	0.00	1	41	85	81	84 -01	
#	820	490	GEN. POLITY	#	0.00	4	3450	1894	54	55 -01	
#	990	750	OPTICAL REPAIRING 751	#	0.00	1	50	33	95	90 -05	
#	1,000	650	WATV. ALUMINUM 751	#	94.6	0.00	4	1350	374	67	68 -01
#	1,100	770	WATV. WOOD FACT.	#	48.2	0.00	3	385	186	100	100 -
#	1,170	1,600	WATV. BAK 751	#	0.00	24	23439	22951	1.17	1.23 -06	
GRAND TOTAL					97	346986	362760				
+ : New 12 months low + : New 12 months high # : Stock divided during the past 12 months + : Listed during the past 12 months P : P/E ratio is 100 or more - : Negative P/E # : Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year											

Pippen returns for Bulls; Jazz beat Rockets

CLEVELAND (AP) — Damon Stoudamire scored 34 points as the Toronto Raptors, the National Basketball Association's second-worst team, beat the reeling Cleveland Cavaliers 102-93 Saturday night.

The Raptors held off a late rally by the Cavs, who played sluggishly two nights after a demoralising 109-84 loss to Seattle.

Trailing 93-77 with 3:23 left, Cleveland pulled within five before Toronto held on.

Lloyd Daniels, who signed a 10-day contract with Toronto on Jan. 6, scored 21 points as the Raptors snapped a six-game losing streak and improved their record to 5-30. Derek Anderson led Cleveland with 24 points.

Minnesota Timberwolves 108, New Jersey Nets 101: In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Tom Gugliotta scored 24 points, including six in the final four minutes, as the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the New Jersey Nets. Reserve Sam Mitchell added 18 points and Stephon Marbury had 17 for the Timberwolves. Rookie Keith Van Horn and Kerry Kittles each scored 22 points for the Nets, who had their four-game home winning streak snapped. The Nets, who trailed 60-44 at halftime, cut Minnesota's lead to 94-93 on Kendall Gill's driving layup with 3:07 left in the game. But they couldn't get any closer.

Orlando Magic 90, Boston Celtics 82: At Orlando, Florida, Rony Seikaly had 19 points and 12 rebounds, and Orlando outscored Boston 29-5 from the foul line to beat the Celtics.

The victory was only the third in the past 13 games for the Magic, who have struggled to find consistent scoring with Penny Hardaway, Nick Anderson and Derek Strong on the injured list.

Boston, which never led, has lost four straight in a span of five days.

Antoine Walker led the Celtics with 21 points and 12 rebounds before being ejected with 1:09 remaining after hanging on the rim after a dunk and drawing his second technical foul.

Chicago Bulls 87, Golden State Warriors 82: At Chicago, Scottie Pippen returned but Michael Jordan again bailed out the Bulls, scoring 17 of his 32 points in the fourth quarter Saturday night as Chicago rallied for an 87-82 victory over the Golden State Warriors.

Making his season debut after missing the first 35 games while recovering from foot surgery, Pippen started and had 14 points, four rebounds and five assists in 31 minutes. Pippen, who demanded a trade two months ago



Chicago Bulls' Michael Jordan jams a bucket in front of Golden State Warriors' Felton Spencer during second half action at the United Center. The Bulls defeat the Warriors 87-82 (Reuters photo)

because he felt mistreated by team management, received a loud standing ovation when introduced, bumped chests with buddy Ron Harper and then returned to his role as primary ballhandler, offensive facilitator and defensive stopper.

Dennis Rodman had 16 rebounds for the Bulls, who have won their last 14 home games to improve to 18-1 at the United Center.

Joe Smith scored 23 points for Golden State. **Indiana Pacers 84, Dallas Mavericks 79:** At Dallas, Reggie Miller's 3-pointer with 32.5 seconds left gave Indiana the lead for good, and the Pacers rallied from a 19-point third-quarter deficit for a victory over the Dallas Mavericks.

Miller scored 24 points, Rik Smits had 14 and Mark Jackson added 13 for the Pacers, who've won five of six. Shawn Bradley's 17 points and 14 rebounds led the Mavericks, who've lost 17 of 18.

Utah Jazz 111, Houston Rockets 84: At Houston, Karl Malone

scored 24 points and Utah coach Jerry Sloan won his 600th NBA game as the Jazz beat the injury-depleted Houston Rockets.

Utah has won six straight and 10 of its last 12 games. Houston has lost eight of its last 11, including four straight at home.

Sloan improved his career record to 600-370, his victory total includes 506 with the Jazz and the rest with the Chicago Bulls from 1979-1982.

Houston played without four injured starters — Charles Barkley, Clyde Drexler, Hakeem Olajuwon and Matt Maloney, whose string of 113 consecutive starts ended because of a bad elbow.

San Antonio Spurs 109, Sacramento Kings 67: At San Antonio, Tim Duncan scored 28 points. David Robinson added 24 and the San Antonio Spurs rebounded from a crushing loss in Phoenix with a rout of the Sacramento Kings.

A night after their five-game winning streak was snapped in a 21-point loss to the Suns, the Spurs ended Sacramento's win-

ning streak at four games.

The Kings scored just 40 points over the final three quarters after finishing the first period tied at 27-27. Sacramento, which had won its last three games against San Antonio, got 17 points from Corliss Williamson.

Milwaukee Bucks 95, Portland Trail Blazers 90 (overtime): At Milwaukee, Ray Allen scored 23 points and Armon Gilliam had four of his 21 in overtime as the Milwaukee Bucks defeated the Portland Trail Blazers.

Kenny Anderson scored a season-high 31 points and Rasheed Wallace had season highs with 23 points and 10 rebounds for Portland, but the Trail Blazers still extended their losing streak to a season-high four games.

Portland coach Mike Dunleavy received scattered boos during pregame introductions. It was his first trip back to Milwaukee since resigning last April after five straight losing seasons — four as coach and one as general manager of the Bucks.

Atletico hold Real with late equaliser

MADRID (AFP) — Atletico held rivals Real to a 1-1 draw in Saturday's eagerly-awaited Spanish first division derby showdown — thanks to a goal three minutes from time by late substitute Jose Mari.

Real appeared to have sewn up the match 19 minutes earlier thanks to a goal from Savio.

Twenty minutes into the second-half, however, Real brought on Savio and Morientes for Guti and Croatian Davor Suker. It was an inspired move and within five minutes Savio had put Real clear after latching on to a cross from Roberto Carlos.

Jose Mari, who replaced Lardin for Atletico, had been on the pitch for just ten minutes when he scored the equaliser.

Rookie Aussie becomes lowest ranked to win an ATP tournament

ADELAIDE (AFP) — Rookie Australian teenager Lleyton Hewitt became the lowest ranked player to win an ATP tournament when he toppled Jason Stoltenberg in the final of the Australian men's hardcourt championship here Sunday.

His 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7-4) victory also sent his lowly world ranking of 550 leaping toward 200.

"It hasn't really sunk in yet like every other day, but I played some of my best tennis again hitting the ball well," said the 16-year-old who Saturday humbled Andre Agassi in their semi-final clash.

It was only the youngster's second ATP Tour event. He beat the record of Senegal's Yahiya Doumbia as the previous lowest ranked tournament winner when he downed American Todd Martin in the final in Lyon in 1988 when ranked 453rd.

Hewitt also became the youngest player to win an ATP event since current world number three Michael Chang won in San Francisco in 1988 at 16 years and 7 months.

Hewitt is 16 years 11 months old.

"I do not think they knew really how to play me and had not seen a lot of my matches," he said.

The 79th ranked Stoltenberg had some advice for his conqueror as they shook hands at the end of the match.

"Enjoy this win but move on, try and kick on and use this win as a springboard for things to come," he said.

The match went for over two hours and opened with a marathon opening game on Stoltenberg's serve.

It went to deuce five times, with Stoltenberg withstanding two break points and finally holding with a smash.

Stoltenberg then gained the momentum in the first set, holding his next service game easily and breaking Hewitt in the fourth game.

Stoltenberg then captured the first set after games went to serve.

He had only polite support from the capacity crowd which was cheering for the hometown boy to create history and his game dropped in the second set.

Hewitt broke Stoltenberg in the second game of the second set which went to deuce six times.

Stoltenberg broke back but the momentum remained with his younger opponent who forced the 1996 Wimbledon semi-finalist into error after error and took the second set 6-3.

The youngster continued to dominate from the baseline and making Stoltenberg work for every point to take the final set 6-4.

In the doubles final Aussie duo Joshua Eagle and Andrew Florent captured their first career title together by defeating Number two seeds South African Ellis Ferreira and American Rick Leach 6-4 6-7 (7-3) 6-3.

Williams to meet Hingis in clash of the teenagers

SYDNEY (AFP) — America's Venus Williams advanced Sunday into a second round bout with Martin Hingis in the Sydney International tournament, which is set to be a testing ground for tennis's teenage stars.

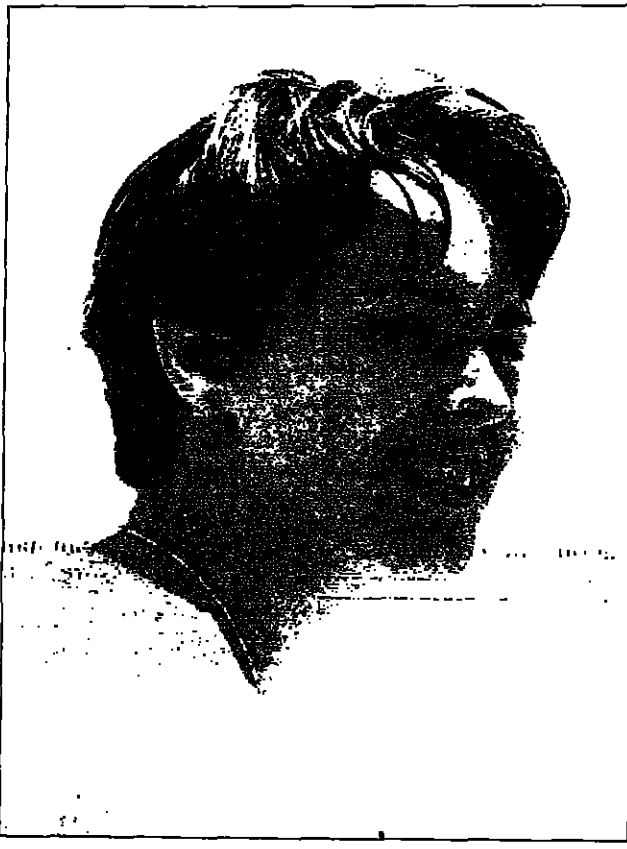
Williams, currently ranked 22, is aiming to knock Hingis from her number one spot this year and predicts that her 16-year-old sister and hitting partner Serena, ranked 99, will crack the top ten.

She will meet the Swiss No. 1 after playing only a single set in the tournament.

Romanian Dragomir was forced out with an injury in their first-round match Sunday.

"I wasn't playing what I consider good. And it was the first match of the season so I really would have wanted to get a little bit more practice," Williams told reporters after winning the set 6-4.

Hingis, who had a bye in the Sydney tournament's first round, last met 17-year-old Williams at the U.S. Open final where she beat her 6-0 6-4. "In that match I did a lot of mistakes, things that weren't called for, basically out of control, and she took advantage of me playing so badly," Williams said. But Williams, who stands out here with her athletic 1.8 metre frame and beaded



World No. 1 Martina Hingis, sporting a new haircut, takes a break during a practice session at White City in Sydney January 11. Hingis is in Australia to compete in the Sydney International tournament which goes through to January 17. She said she feared all the 10 top ranked players who threatened her status as this year's Queen of the Court (Reuters photo)

hair, has put a brave face on meeting the number-one seed so soon in the competition.

"This title is hers, I suppose, and she is going to want to defend it ... so I am going to have to be ready," she said of the 1997 titleholder.

If Williams upsets Hingis, also aged 17, she will be on course for a semi-final showdown against

Romanian fourth seed Irina Spirlia.

That would bring back memories of their infamous U.S. Open semi-final last year when the two collided at a change of ends, drawing charges of racism from Williams' father.

Another rising star who, although unseeded here, could put pressure on Hingis in the longer term is Russia's Anna Kournikova.

The stunning 16-year-old, who took time out to attend the Australian premiere of the Spice Girls' movie Spice World on Saturday night, will play second seed Lindsay Davenport if she beats Indonesia's Yayuk Basuki.

Croatian teenage star Mirjana Lucic is another top prospect who advanced to the women's first round Sunday. Apart from the youngsters tipped to battle it out with Hingis over the next decade, the Swiss champion has said that any of the top-10 ranked players is capable of ending the season as World No. 1.

"There are so many, everybody is tough from the top-10 players," she told reporters on the eve of the Sydney tournament.

But her disarming modesty belies a sensational winning streak in 1997, with 75 victories out of 80 matches including three Grand Slams.

Metz edge further clear as Monaco crash again

PARIS (AFP) — Goalkeeper Lionel Letizi was the hero when he saved a late penalty to enable Metz to clinch a difficult 1-0 victory over visiting Rennes and stay top of the French first division late Saturday.

Pascal Bedrossian, who had come on to replace Patrick Weiser four minutes earlier, held his head in horror when he saw Letizi dive and hold his spot kick.

The 83rd minute penalty, awarded when Letizi brought down the young Nicolas Gousse, should have enabled the visitors to earn a welcome point.

As it was, however, a 44th minute goal by Bruno Rodriguez, lucky not to be ruled off-side when he was put through by Frederic Meyrieu, was enough to keep

Metz clear at the top.

Metz' rivals Monaco lost ground in the title race when they crashed to a shock 1-0 home defeat in their Riviera derby against Cannes.

Monaco's latest setback followed hard on the heels of their elimination from the League Cup by second division Niort earlier in the week.

Marseille, who went clear after just four minutes thanks to another Laurent Blanc goal, finally went down 2-1 at Lyon where Alain Caveglia scored twice for the home side.

In other matches, Bordeaux were 2-0 home winners over Bastia. Chateauroux finished 3-2 winners over visiting Auxerre. Toulouse beat Le Havre 1-0 and Montpellier were 2-1 winners at Guingamp.

Santoro and Korda advance to Qatar final

DOHA (AFP) — Frenchman Fabrice Santoro completed two upsets within a few hours Saturday to advance to the final of the Qatar Open ATP Tour event.

Santoro, the eighth seed, surprised top-seeded Briton Greg Rusedski 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 in the quarter-finals and then downed

fourth-seeded Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia 6-1, 6-4 in the semis.

Petr Korda of the Czech Republic, the third seed, will face Santoro in the final.

Korda first beat fifth-seeded Briton Tim Henman 7-5, 4-6, 6-4 and then breezed past No.7 seed Andrei Medvedev of

Ukraine 6-3, 6-4.

The quarter-finals were originally due to be played on Friday but had to be postponed because of rain.

Rusedski, the top seed in a major ATP Tour event for the first time, was outmanoeuvred by the double-handed Santoro, who is in sizzling form this week. "I didn't start very well

and although I got back into it I made too many mistakes with volleys," said Rusedski. "He played very well, and I'm not too disappointed. It's preparation for the Australian Open which matters."

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Jordan Olympic Committee reviews sports facilities for 9th Pan-Arab Games

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In a bid to update and renew sport facilities ahead of the 9th Pan-Arab Games in 1999, the Jordan Olympic Committee has started a campaign to upgrade facilities in the Kingdom, director of Al Hussein Youth City Abdul Ghani Tabalat said Sunday.

Mr. Tabalat, a member of the Technical Committee for the upcoming Games in Amman, said a memo was circulated to all concerned parties to "list all sports facilities we have that can be utilised in the upcoming tournament."

"The purpose of this step is to see what we have and what other facilities are needed," Mr. Tabalat told the Jordan Times.

He said plans included the building of a multi purpose indoor stadium at Al Hussein Youth City with a capacity for 7,000 participants and spectators.

Mr. Tabalat added that building an Olympic-size swimming pool was a must for hosting swimming contests in the event in which more than 20 Arab states are expected to take part.

He added other projects include the expanding of the Royal Lounge at the Youth City, by raising its capacity from 40 to 150.

"The door is open for all private and public institutions to take part in our campaign to host the Games. We have already received replies from private universities and educational institutions who expressed willingness in hosting some of the events," Mr. Tabalat said.

"The current survey of our sport facilities will help in assessing our capabilities and preparing what is needed to make the event a success."

On Dec. 28, the flag of the 9th Pan-Arab Games was officially hoisted at Amman International Stadium, confirming the Kingdom as host.

The Games were originally scheduled to take place in 2001 but the Arab Sports Federation (ASF) decided to advance the date to 1999 because of the recent decision to hold the 2nd Southeast Asian Games in Beirut in 2001 and the Mediterranean Games in Tunisia in the same year.

A preparatory committee, headed by His Royal Highness Prince

Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, was formed to oversee the preparations for the Arab Games.

The committee formed several other offshoots to help in their work, such as the competitions committee, headed by Sari Hamdan and the national teams committee, headed by Mohammad Jamil Abul Tayyeb.

Other committees that were formed are: Equipment and Technical Supplies headed by Mr. Tabalat, National Referees Committee headed by Mudar Majdoub and the Medical Committee headed by Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz.

Mr. Tabalat said that budget allocated by the government to the Ministry of Culture and Youth for the current year, is estimated at JD4.5 million, and is slated to cover the building of new facilities and modernise already existing ones.

Jordanian officials were quoted as saying that the allocated budget was not adequate to ensure good preparation and build new sport facilities in Jordan.

Lebanon, which hosted the 8th Pan-Arab Games last year, received \$28 million from Saudi Arabia and

Kuwait to help in erecting sport facilities, which were destroyed during the civil war.

Mr. Tabalat said that a three-man delegation was expected to leave for Saudi Arabia to meet ASF Chairman Prince Faisal Ben Fahd Ben Abdul Aziz, to lobby for assistance for the 9th Games.

ASF Secretary General Othman Sa'ad was quoted last month as saying that sponsorship for Jordan's bid would be garnered through slashing the 50 per cent ASF margin of profit on promotion and television coverage in addition to aid from the Arab League estimated at \$700,000.

One of the suggestions to raise funds for the Arab Games discussed by Jordanian officials was to sell television broadcasting rights to private companies, which would secure at least \$10 million.

The Pan-Arab Games have only been held eight times: Alexandria in 1953, Beirut 1957, Casablanca 1961, Cairo 1965, Damascus 1976, Morocco 1985, Damascus 1992 and Beirut 1997.



Austria's Hermann Maier passes a post on his way to win a men's World Cup Super-G race January 11. Maier clocked a time of 1:14.84 minutes and won the race ahead of his compatriots Andreas Schiffrer and Stephan Eberharter (Reuters photo)

Maier leads Austrian clean sweep

SCHLADMING, Austria (AFP) — Hermann Maier won his sixth World Cup race of the year when he led Austria to a clean sweep in Sunday's Super-G. The 25-year-old former brick layer clocked 1min 14.84secs to win his second Super-G in as many days. Teammates Andreas Schiffrer (1:16.07) and Stefan Eberharter (1:16.14) were second and third.

It was a chilling performance from Maier who is now firm favourite for gold at next month's Olympics in Nagano. But the Austrian insists he has not yet turned his sights on Japan. "I am not thinking about the Olympics. At

the moment I am just happy winning," said Maier.

But the skier who was once rejected by the Austria ski team for not being good enough admits that his success this season will put extra pressure on him in Nagano.

"I know that a lot more will be expected from me in Japan, but I am confident I can handle the pressure," he said.

Schiffrer admitted his teammate would be hard to beat.

"Maier is skiing with such confidence at the moment. The more difficult the piste, the better he skis. Everyone has had trouble here except him. It can get to you," said the Austrian.

SCOREBOARD

NBA

Toronto	102	Cleveland	93
Minnesota	108	New Jersey	101
Orlando	90	Boston	82
Chicago	87	Golden State	82
Indiana	84	Dallas	79
Utah	111	Houston	84
San Antonio	109	Sacramento	67
Milwaukee	95	Portland	90 (OT)

NHL

Carolina	2	NY Islanders	1 (OT)
Pittsburgh	4	New Jersey	1
Chicago	4	Toronto	3
St Louis	5	Calgary	1
Colorado	3	Ottawa	3 (OT)
Edmonton	4	Los Angeles	3
San Jose	5	Buffalo	2
Vancouver	2	Florida	2 (OT)

NY Rangers at Montreal — Postponed

Australian men's Hardcourt Championships
Singles finals:
Lleyton Hewitt (Aus) bt Jason Stoltenberg (Aus) 3-6 6-3 7-6 (7-4).

Sydney International tennis tournament

Women's singles first round:
Maggie Maleeva (Bul) bt Sabine Appelmans (Bel) 6-1, 1-6, 6-3
Venus Williams (USA) bt Ruxandra Dragomir (Rom) 6-4, retired

English Premiership

Arsenal	2	Leeds	1
Aston Villa	1	Leicester	1
Bolton	0	Southampton	0
Chelsea	3	Coventry	1
Crystal Palace	1	Everton	3
Liverpool	2	Wimbledon	0
Man. Utd	2	Tottenham	0
Sheff Wed	2	Newcastle	1
West Ham	6	Barnsley	0

Doha ATP event

Semi-finals
Petr Korda (Cze x3) bt Andrei Medvedev (Ukr x7) 6-3, 6-4
Fabrice Santoro (Fra x8) bt Goran Ivanisevic (Cro x4) 6-1, 6-4

Spanish First Division

Atletico	1	Real Madrid	1
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French First Division

Chateauroux	3	Auxerre	2
Bordeaux	2	Bastia	0
Monaco	0	Cannes	1
Toulouse	1	Le Havre	0
Lyon	2	Marseille	1
Guingamp	1	Montpellier	2
Metz	1	Rennes	0

World Swimming Championships

Akatiev completes 5km-25km open water double

PERTH (AFP) —

Indomitable Russian endurance swimmer Alexi Akatiev defied lumpy seas and the world's best with victory in the men's 25-kilometre open water race here Sunday.

Backing up from his emphatic 5 kilometre race gold medal swim on Wednesday, the 23-year-old Akatiev took charge about three kms from the finish in a rolling Indian Ocean swell to beat David Meca of Spain with Argentina's Gabriel Chaillou third.

The United States also claimed a double gold when Tobie Smith followed up teammate Erica Rose's victory in Wednesday's 5 km race, to capture the women's 25 kilometre race from Peggy Buchse of Germany and Edith van Dijk of the Netherlands. Based on points Italy won the teams gold medal from Australia and the United States.

Akatiev's time for the 25 kms in the ocean off Perth's northern beaches was five hours five minutes and 42.1 seconds.

"It was a very hard race with difficult waves which tired me out quickly," said Akatiev.

"I expected to win my second gold medal at the world championships, although (Australian) Grant Robinson's fast start made it difficult for me, but I can come back."

Meca, in his first ocean race swim, steadily made ground on Akatiev over the final couple of kilometres, finished in 5:07:22.9,

almost two minutes behind the winner.

"I thought I could catch the Akatiev although I was a fair way behind him," said Meca. "Second place is a good result after my poor start which put me back to 14th at halfway."

Robinson, who set the cracking early pace, came home in seventh position, but had to be helped out of the water by officials in an exhausted state.

Smith, 24, a two-time U.S. national champion from New York, trailed Buchse by about 100 metres in the women's race with under 5 km

left to the finish, but

powered home in the choppy seas to win in five hours 31 minutes and 20.1 seconds. Buchse touched the finish pad in 5:32:19.2 with van Dijk finishing in 5:38:06.9.

"I struggled for the first five kilometres, but started gaining and finally caught the leaders about the 20km mark," said Smith. "It was hard but I wanted

MEDALS TABLE

Nation	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Russia	3	1	1	5
USA	3	1	1	5
China	2	1	0	3
Italy	1	0	2	3
Germany	0	2	2	4
Australia	0	2	1	3
Netherlands	0	1	1	2
Spain	0	1	0	1
Argentina	0	0	1	1

it. "The last leg was wavy and the turn was bad, but coming back it was extremely bad."

"The plan was not to let the leaders get too far in front and then have to reel them back."

"I was tired at the finish, but not as tired as if I finished second."

Buchse, who finished almost a minute behind Smith, said: "I tried to take it out hard from the beginning and I felt good at the turning point."

"On the way back there were quite a lot of waves and eventually the American came upon me and my strength was going. I couldn't stay with her."

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NOTICE TO CANADIAN CITIZENS

Canadian citizens residing in Jordan for a period of more than three months, are invited to register with the Canadian Embassy, Pearl of Shmeisani Building, Shmeisani / P.O. Box 815403, Amman 11180. Registration may be made in person or by mail. Telephone 666124 for further information.

AVIS AUX CITOYENS CANADIENS

Les citoyens canadiens résidant en Jordanie pour une période de plus de trois mois sont invités à s'inscrire à l'Ambassade du Canada située dans l'Immeuble "Pearl of Shmeisani" à Shmeisani B.P. 815403 Amman 11180, Jordanie. L'inscription peut se faire en personne ou par courrier. Pour de plus amples informations, prière téléphoner au 666124

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The closing date for submitting bids is 12:00 hours local time Monday, February 16, 1998.

Sameh Madani
Managing Director

Israeli high court endorses torture of Arab detainee

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's supreme court narrowly rejected on Sunday an appeal from a Palestinian detainee seeking a halt to the use of physical pressure by his police interrogators.

The court, in a five-to-four ruling, authorised the Shin Bet security agency to continue using physical force in its questioning of Abdul Ghanimat, an Islamist who has confessed to involvement in a string of deadly anti-Israeli attacks.

But the justices said the authorisation was only temporary pending a further ruling on the legality of the interrogation methods used

against Ghanimat and other people suspected of involvement in terrorist actions.

Chief Justice Aharon Barak was among the minority of judges voting in favour of Ghanimat's appeal.

Ghanimat was arrested in April and confessed to being part of an Islamist group responsible for killing 11 Israelis over the previous 16 months.

He complained to the supreme court that despite his confessions, interrogators continue to torture him for information about the Islamic Resistance

Movement (Hamas).

His case coincided with a high security alert across Israel due to intelligence reports that Hamas or the Islamic Jihad were planning a major attack against an Israeli city.

Israeli law permits the use of "moderate physical pressure" against detainees and allows even more severe interrogation in cases where suspects are believed to have information about an imminent attack. Israel denies the methods amount to torture.

Moderate pressure comprises binding detainees in uncomfortable positions for

days on end and sleep deprivation. More severe interrogation methods involve violently shaking prisoners.

Allegre Pacheco, an attorney for the Israeli Public Council Against Torture, claimed the treatment of Ghanimat clearly amounts to torture.

Amnesty International issued an appeal last week for a halt to the use of physical pressure by Israeli security forces.

"Israel is the only country in the world which has legalised the use of torture by authorising certain interrogation techniques," it said.

Moderates vow to topple Israeli government if no troop pullout

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Moderate members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's fractious coalition vowed Wednesday to topple the government if right-wing hardliners prevent a promised troop pullback from the West Bank.

Israel Radio reported that 23 out of the 61 deputies in Mr. Netanyahu's parliamentary coalition had signed a letter warning that they would vote against the government if it did not carry out the troop withdrawals required under peace accords with the Palestinians.

"If there won't be a with-

drawal... we won't be able to continue with the government and we will leave it," Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani of the centrist Third Way Party told Israel Radio.

Mr. Kahalani's group alone, with four deputies in the 120-member parliament, has the power to topple Mr. Netanyahu since the government's majority was cut to 61 seats with the resignation Sunday of the moderate foreign minister, David Levy.

Roman Bronfman of the Israel B'aliya Party of recent Russian immigrants, who organised the petition

to Mr. Netanyahu, told Israel Radio, "The right-wing extremists in the government need to know that they represent the fringes of the Israeli public."

"Most coalition members support an advance in the diplomatic process," said Mr. Bronfman. "Israel also has to fulfil its commitments."

The moderate counter-attack came in response to threats by the hardline National Religious Party, which has nine deputies, to topple Mr. Netanyahu if he cedes any more land to the Palestinians.

Israeli bomb expert arrested in Greek ships insurance scam

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A senior Israeli police officer has been arrested for allegedly providing explosives to be used to sink four Greek cargo ships as part of a massive insurance scam, officials said Sunday.

Major Yuval Kuperman, from the police bomb disposal unit, was arrested two weeks ago for providing the explosives to two employees of a private Israeli security company allegedly hired by an unnamed Greek shipping company to scuttle the four ships, a police spokesman said.

The two security men, Itamar Gur Aryeh and Shimon Pozner, were also arrested as was the Israeli representative of the shipping company, Moshe Perri, he said.

Kuperman explained to colleagues that he needed the explosives for an unexplained "mission" abroad, he said.

News of the arrests was kept under wraps by an Israeli court order banning publication of any details of the case. The court order expired Sunday.

According to investigators, the Greek shipping company planned to have the four ships blown up in European ports and then claim they were lost in accidents and collect insurance claims on the vessels.

The Jerusalem district court on Sunday ordered an extension of Perri's remand while the other three suspects were still undergoing police interrogation, officials said.

Libya denies British press report of germ warfare programme

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Libya on Saturday denied there were any Iraqi bacteriologists in Libya following a report in London's Times newspaper that Iraqi experts were helping it develop a secret germ warfare programme.

"These claims are part of a hostile campaign the United States is waging against Libya to block its opposition to [U.S.] hegemonic policies," said a commentary carried by the official news agency JANA.

The Times on Tuesday quoted Western intelligence sources as saying that up to 12 Iraqi scientists were now working in Libya under an agreement signed by Tripoli and Baghdad seven months ago.

The paper said these were in addition to Iraqi scientists it said had been working in Libya since the end of the 1991 Gulf war.

"If there are any Iraqi scientists or experts in Libya, they are working in the Libyan education sector alongside other foreign assistants of various nationalities, particularly from India and fraternal and friendly states, who are helping to advance this sector in Libya," said the JANA commentary.



SNOW SCULPTURE CHAMPIONSHIPS: An ice sculpture entitled 'Sounds of Winter Spirits,' by a team out of Denver captained by Thomas Barlow, is shown Friday. Seventeen teams from 10 different countries have sculpted 10-15 feet high fleeting works of art this week during the 1998 International Snow Sculpture Championships in Breckenridge, Colo., taking place from Jan. 6-10 (AP photo)

Turkey stops foreigners seeking to leave illegally for Europe

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Turkish police detained 1,017 foreigners overnight in a roundup of people suspected of plotting to enter European countries illegally, police said Saturday.

An Iraqi died when he tried to flee police by jumping out a fourth-storey window, Anatolian news agency reported.

The sweep focused on hotels, bars, restaurants and other public places on the European side of Istanbul, police said.

Those detained included 350 foreigners, including 210 from the predominantly Kurdish area of northern

Iraq, who were believed to be planning to leave the country illegally by boat.

Police said they had detained 243 other "suspect" foreigners as well as 424, including some Asians, who did not have proper papers.

Some of those detained were reportedly working illegally in Istanbul.

Many foreigners destroy their identity documents when they enter the country to make it more difficult for authorities to expel them to their homelands if they are discovered, Istanbul police chief, Hasan Ozdemir, said.

Earlier in the week, at

least 600 foreigners planning to leave clandestinely for Europe — half of them Iraqi Kurds — were detained in a series of sweeps intended to brake a wave of illegal immigrants to Italy and other European countries.

Turkey has alleged that those countries were encouraging clandestine immigration by holding out offers of political asylum.

Nearly 12,000 foreigners, most of them Iraqis, have been detained by Turkish security forces at the border with Greece in the past year.

Turkey warns against new Cyprus airbase

ANKARA (AFP) — A senior Turkish official issued a strong warning Saturday against the Cypriot government's stated plans to open a new airbase intended for use by Greek military aircraft as early as the end of the month.

"By offering a military base to Greece, the Greek side of the island is preparing its own suicide," said Turkish foreign ministry undersecretary, Korkmaz Haktanir, before meeting Turkish Cypriot officials in the northern sector of the divided capital.

"The Greek Cypriot administration is in the process of donning the rope which will be used in its own hanging," he told the Turkish news agency Anatolia. "The end of this rope is in the hands of Athens, just as it was in 1974."

Mr. Haktanir accused the internationally-recognised government in Nicosia of

"provoking tension not only in Cyprus but throughout the eastern Mediterranean with its aggressive armament policy."

The strong warning from the Turkish official followed hawkish remarks Friday from Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides.

He announced that the new airbase, near the western town of Paphos, would be ready for use on Jan. 24.

And he restated his determination to press ahead with the deployment of controversial new ground-to-air missiles which he said would "cause such damage to the enemy's air force that they will think twice before attacking again."

President Clerides's comments were dismissed by some opposition MPs as electioneering ahead of presidential elections in February in which he faces a difficult contest against an independent

candidate backed by both the main communist opposition party and his former centre-right allies.

But they prompted Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş Friday to call on the United Nations, the United States and Britain to stop the Greek Cypriots from opening the new base.

Cyprus has been divided since Ankara invaded the northern third of the island in 1974 following a Greek Cypriot coup in Nicosia seeking union with Athens.

Ankara does not recognise the internationally-recognised government in Nicosia, which it says represents only the Greek Cypriot community.

It is the only government to recognise a breakaway Turkish Republic of North Cyprus which Turkish Cypriot leaders declared in 1983.

Kuwait's Islamist deputies threaten to grill information minister over books

KUWAIT (AP) — Islamist legislators are threatening to call Kuwait's information minister for questioning on grounds he allowed books insulting to Islam at a book fair, Al Anba daily reported Sunday.

The pro-government newspaper quoted Deputy Mohammad Al Aleim as saying "indications were pointing in the direction of grilling" the minister, Sheikh Saud Al Sabah, before parliament.

Mr. Al Aleim spoke with reporters after a meeting of a

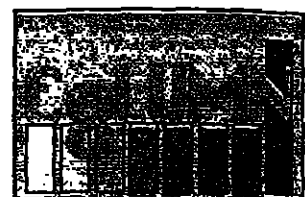
parliament committee called Saturday to discuss the issue. There are 16 Islamist deputies in the 50-seat legislature.

The deputies already have demanded the resignation of several senior information ministry officials responsible for organising the exhibition of Arabic-language books last November.

They charge that 160 of the books on display either insulted God and Islam's Prophet Mohammad or contained explicit sexual references. Sheikh Saud acknowledged

"an unintentional mistake" was made in allowing some of the books to be displayed and apologised for it. And while he promised the parliament such an error would not be repeated, he refused to force any of the ministry's officials to resign.

At a recent parliament meeting, a deputy cited references from the books that he found offensive. He said that one book said "God has created people and stopped caring for them," while another called on human beings to "look for another God."



Italian 'women betrayed by football' rally cancelled

ROME (AFP) — Italian women abandoned every Sunday by their football fanatic husbands or boyfriends have cancelled their "women betrayed by football" rally scheduled Sunday, sources close to the organisers said. Set up by the "Victims of football" association gathering several hundred women, the rally was aimed at denouncing the betrayal Italian women felt when their companions disappeared to follow the rebounds of the round checked ball. Italian stadiums, packed every Sunday, regroup men of all ages and social strata, and politicians of opposing parties can be seen side by side cheering their favourite team.

Civil War enthusiast granted dying wish

LONDON (AFP) — An English Civil War enthusiast is to be granted his dying wish — to have his ashes blown out of the muzzle of a cannon. Bill Annetts was for 28 years a member of the Sealed Knot, a society that re-enacts battles of the civil war between royalists and parliamentarians in mid-17th century England. On Sunday, his ashes will be scattered from a cannon at Donnington Castle at Newbury, after a service with full military honours. "His wish was to be scattered by cannon and we are all too happy to honour that wish," his widow said.

Israeli religious leader bans nose picking on Sabbath

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An observant Jew should not pick his nose on the Sabbath, the day set aside for rest in Judaism, former Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef said this week. "Picking one's nose is prohibited because the hairs could be torn out," the spiritual leader of the Orthodox Shas Party said in a weekly sermon broadcast Saturday night. The Bible bars Jews from working on the Sabbath, which lasts from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. Later texts, which spell out what tasks are forbidden, say that animal fur may not be plucked on the Sabbath and by extension human hair may not be removed on that day.

Rolling Stones frozen out of Montreal concert

MONTREAL (AP) — The Rolling Stones have been frozen out of Montreal. Their concert scheduled for Sunday was cancelled after officials discovered a tear in the flexible roof at Olympic stadium. The tear was likely caused by ice that had built up over several days as freezing rain pelted the city. A crew of about 30 stadium workers had been on the roof of the stadium over the past few days, trying to remove the accumulating ice and snow. The Stones cancelled two shows earlier in the week — in Toronto and Syracuse, New York — after lead singer Mick Jagger developed laryngitis.

Slater takes fun ride in 'Hard Rain' stunts

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — The stunts in the water in the movie "Hard Rain" ended up becoming a fun ride for Christian Slater. In one stunt which involved a jet-ski gun battle in half-submerged high school hallways, it became "sort of a dream come true," says Slater. The sequence ends in a jet-ski hitting a submerged obstacle, catapulting Slater's stunt double 10 metres into a trophy case. "They wouldn't let me do all of it," Slater complained.

Israeli security forces set on high alert for fear of bombing

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Thousands of extra police, soldiers and border guards were deployed around Israel's main cities Sunday as security officials said they had information that Islamists were planning a major bombing.

The security alert, which began late last week, coincided with warnings from Palestinian political leaders that the continuing deadlock in peace negotiations with Israel had put the region "on the edge of an explosion."

The warning was issued after U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross wrapped up a four-day mission to Israel and the Palestinian areas on Friday

without achieving any concrete progress.

Extra patrols on Sunday were scouring markets, shopping malls, bus stations and other public places in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and other main cities while police set up roadblocks at the entrance to major population centres, officials said.

"The only thing we ask of the public is to be patient and be alert," police inspector general, Yehuda Wilk, said.

Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said in a weekend television interview that security agencies had received intelligence reports that Islamist activists planned to stage an attack in a major city,

but that no specific target had been mentioned.

Mr. Mordechai said he passed the intelligence reports to Mr. Ross last week and asked him to appeal to President Yasser Arafat for help from the Palestinian police to prevent any attacks.

Israeli media said the two sides agreed to set up a hot line to exchange information about possible terrorist attacks, but that it would not be operable for several days.

Police sources said Israel feared that the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), the main group opposed to peace accords with Israel, might try to carry out a car bombing.

Clinton's personal involvement could help peace — senator

CAIRO (AFP) — U.S. Senator Arlen Specter on Sunday said only deep, personal involvement by U.S. President Bill Clinton could help achieve progress in the stalled Israeli-Syrian peace talks.

Mr. Specter was addressing reporters in Cairo after talks here with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on the Middle East peace process and U.S. efforts to revive deadlocked negotiations between Israel and

the Arab parties. "I believe that if President Clinton became personally and deeply involved in the peace process, there could be progress in the Syrian-Israeli track," said Mr. Specter, a Republican from the state of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Specter met earlier this month in Damascus with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad and before that held talks in Israel with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The senator said President Assad wanted to resume negotiations with Israel from the point where they left off in February 1996, adding, however, that Mr. Netanyahu told him he had new ideas for resuming the peace talks. Mr. Specter did not elaborate but was reported to have carried a new Israeli offer to Damascus where he met President Assad on Jan. 3.